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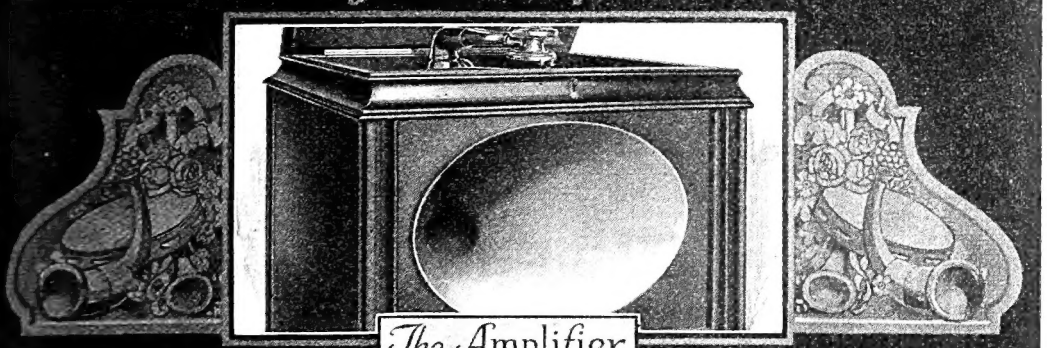

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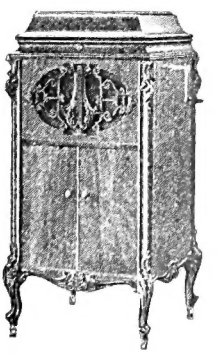

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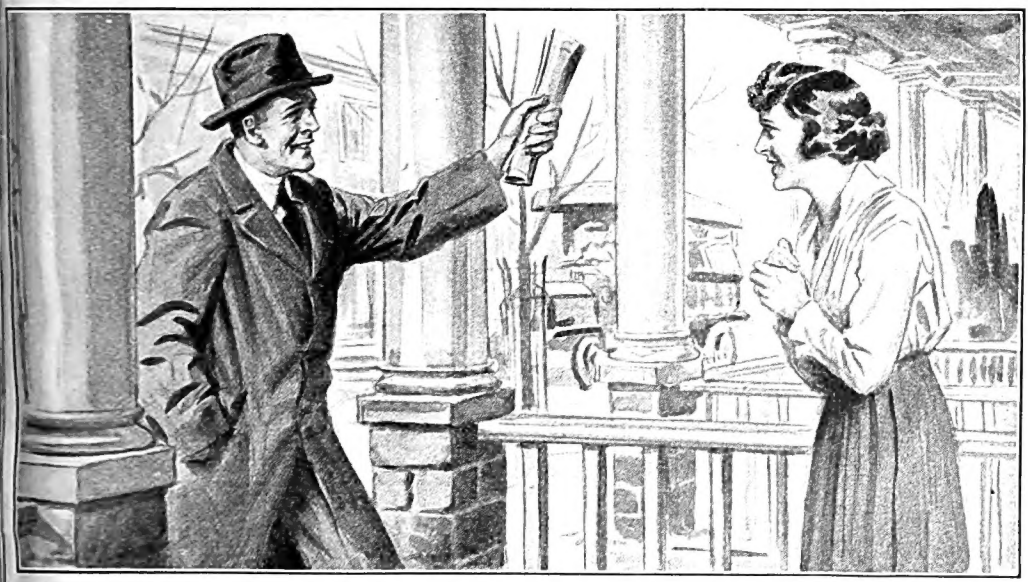

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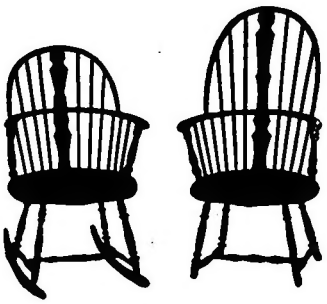

The Seats of the Mighty

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"Your Nose Knows"

All smoking tobaccos use some flavoring. The Encyclopaedia Britannica says about the manufacture of smoking tobacco, ". . . on the Continent and in America certain 'sauces' are employed . . . the use of the 'sauces' is to improve the flavour and burning qualities of the leaves." Tuxedo uses ***chocolate*** — the purest, most wholesome and delicious of all flavorings! Everybody likes chocolate—we all know that chocolate added to anything as a flavoring always makes that thing still more enjoyable.

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Jim Hears the Pirates' Plot

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Volume 21 Number 4

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FROM BEHIND MASKS

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By GORDON YOUNG

In which *Everhard's* search has an unexpected ending.

For other stories in the coming number turn to the Trail Ahead on page 192

FIRST JUNE NUMBER

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THE UNIV... OF TEX...

Adventure

Registered in United States Patent Office

May 18, 1919

Vol. 21 No. 4

The RED INFIDEL

by

CHARLES BEADLE

A Complete Novelette

Author of "Witch-Doctors," "Rabbit, Philosopher," etc.

LIKE a gigantic white octopus squatting upon an elephant-tusk, with blunted gray arms plunged wrist-deep in a treasure chest of sapphires and pearls, is the town of Mazagan on the coast of Morocco.

Two miles out was the R. M. S. *Arzila*, stocky and fussy, as incongruous as a Christian Science church in medieval France. Past the gray paws of the Portuguese embattlements jutting into the sea, rolled and plunged a clumsy boat manned by brown Moors. In the stern-sheets sat a red-bearded man in a gray suit and Panama hat.

As he approached the shore, emerged from the water-gate a party of tourists. On the beach they halted. A stout lady in a pink hat and a violent green gown insisted upon exposing her chromatic stockings for the adoration of the world by sliding off her donkey on to her knees, a performance greeted with hilarious—if discreet—delight by the spectators.

"Whaffor you want sit down?" demanded the guide. "Fat lady no good sit down jus' same camel! *Arrgh!*" he commanded in the camel driver language and, jerking her to her feet, demanded five shillings from each member of the party.

"But you perfectly dreadful creature!" protested the stout lady. "You most distinctly said ten shillings for everything, didn't he, Alice, Herbert?"

Herbert, a tall, pallid man, attached to long mustaches, supported her, aided and abetted by the entire group.

"I tell you ten shilling for come 'long with donkey—see wonderful city—Moor man bazaar — gov'nor palace — pris'n — Portgese castle, Portgese fort; then you come awf'lly jolly hotel, eat lunch an', when you wan' all, come 'long see Tiber'us — Rom'n ruins — 'cludin' donkey boy —'terpreter — hotel — wine—all for ten shilling! But I no 'say nothin' 'bout boat. You want go 'long ship. Ship she want go 'long. You want go 'long in more small boat catch ship, huh? Fine! Five shillin'!"

"You're a —— thief!" said Herbert.

"Raather," agreed the guide. "Five shillin'."

"We won't give you a single penny."

"You stop 'long Mazagan, yes? Fine! Come 'long I take you back 'long hotel? Ship she want to go!"

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"This is a confounded swindle!" stormed another man.

"Perfectly disgusting!" asserted a girl.

"Raather!" drawled the guide. "Perfec'ly disgus'in'! Perfec'ly, awf'lly, bally disgus'in'! Five shilling."

The man in the boat watched the scene with a slight smile hidden in his Shavian beard while his baggage was unloading. The guide's fez cap was stuck on one edge of a shaven skull as if gummed; and, to balance the composition, his *jelab* hung upon the edge of the other bony shoulder. His nose was hawklike; a gash of a mouth was half hidden by whiskers that sprouted in clumps like desert grass. He stood in the center of the group of tourists, large hands flitting in the dying sun like brown bats.

"You no know what you wan'," said he. Then, as a protest broke out again, he exclaimed, "All right, you stop 'long beach sleep! Fine!"

And, wheeling abruptly, he waded toward the boat. At the gleam of the red beard, he stood stock-still, grinned largely and exclaimed—

"Hullo, Pum'kin!"

The stranger looked mildly surprized at this appellation.

"You come 'long, ole chap! I take you. Yes, whaat?"

Then, as the red beard began to rise, the Moor stared. The man continued to rise until he had attained the height of six feet three inches. The mouth of the guide opened wide. He gazed upward and ejaculated with much eloquence—

"Oh, boy!"

A slightly amused look crept into the blue eyes.

"Do you think you can carry me?" he asked.

"Rather!" assented the guide. "If I carry fat ole girl, I carry you more better! Rather, ole chap!"

Turning, he presented his back that the other might straddle his shoulders. The giant felt himself lifted and borne if not as easily as the proverbial feather then as a circus strong man bears his cannon-balls with suspicious ease. To the disappointment of the party on the beach, who had watched in delirious expectancy of a fall, the guide set Red-Beard neatly upon his long legs by stooping forward with his hands upon his knees.

"By the lord!" said Red-Beard, with his hand in his pocket. "You're quite powerful!"

"Rather, ole chap," agreed the Moorish guide. "I am hillman."

Then, as he replaced his fez cap, he saw a hand presenting a coin. He stared at it, raised his head with a haughty jerk and, deliberately turning his back, said to his former charges peremptorily:

"Now whaat you want do? You stop 'long beach, yes? You all got five shilling rather, whaat?"

"Look here, you —— thief!" exclaimed Herbert menacingly. "If you don't take us on board, we'll——"

"You look out, ole chap, you want call me —— thief you get your neck broke quick. I am Riff man. No call Moor man thief."

"Oh, Herbert, do be careful!" exclaimed the stout lady. "All these dreadful people are brigands, I'm sure!"

"You perfec'ly c'rect, ole lady," assured the guide swiftly. "I 'strawdin'ry brig'nd! You want to pay five shillin'?"

"One learns. That's the first time I've ever known an Arab to refuse bakshish," remarked Red-Beard *sotto voce* as he watched the discussion.

Then, pocketing the rejected coin, he stalked away.

AS HE passed within the blue shadows, a belated guide, hurrying down to the beach for the pickings that should be left, accosted him. The giant glanced at him and nodded.

"Hotel Europe!"

The guide slithered ahead and proceeded to lead him toward the other end of the town. A hand shot out and grabbed the fellow by the *jelab*.

"The hotel's near the water-gate! Understand?"

The guide leered and, wheeling about, brought him within three short streets to a great gate over which was set in the blank wall in Roman characters "Grande Hotel Europe," evidently in order that the stranger should know first that it was a hotel. Secondly, that he might, if God were good, imagine there to be another and better hotel which would afford an invaluable opportunity for an interesting if futile tour—and incidentally afford the guide extra bakshish.

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Inside, entered beneath an arch, was a cobbled courtyard, surrounded by white-pillared walls supporting the bedrooms in the Moorish style. From a gloomy recess emerged the proprietor, spreading welcoming hands and speaking a Spanish-French patois of his own composition which only a very experienced traveler could have possibly interpreted.

"*Si,* the *señor* could have a *'beau chambre'*." And following a swift glance of appraisal, "The price would be two dollars—*hassani—par zoir.*"

The *señor's* acceptance produced lines of regret around the host's bulgy eyes, which afterward oozed genuine tears for his foolishness in mistaking a *Señor Americano* for a mere Englishman, when, as all the world knows, the Spaniard wishes to borrow, the Italian has nothing, the German little, the Frenchman will bargain, the Englishman pays if you ask with modesty, but the Americano is full of money and the more you ask the more he will think of you.

The *Señor Americano* was conducted to a room on the veranda above, a cell of a place, possibly whitewashed in the proprietor's rash youth, containing a pallet of a bed, one broken chair, a crippled table and an undiluted odor of musty garlic, rancid oil and drainage. After the host had retired backward, the stranger sniffed appreciatively.

"H'm," he muttered, fingering his beard. "A healthy cross between a ripe limburger and a dead Portuguese! Personally, I have a preference for a half decayed Arab, so we must see what can be done by a subcutaneous injection of bakshish. H'm."

At that moment the proprietor slid through the door with a deprecatory demand to know whether the *señor* would require dinner.

"The *señor* may possibly require an undertaker," said he and departed to seek one Don Garcia Estrella Martinez, to whom he had been recommended as an interpreter, leaving the astonished host twisted into a note of wriggling interrogation.

However, Don Garcia proved to be a second edition of the hotel proprietor, and the red giant, being a keen judge of men, turned him down hard.

"H'm," he communed to himself on the way to the hotel. "I agree with myself. Arab smells better than Portuguese. Now I wonder of what material this superlative, tip-refusing person may be?"

Twitching the end of his beard perplexedly, he returned to his room. The said Don Garcia had been extravagantly recommended to him at Gibraltar by the consul. To find a man for his purpose would prove apparently to be difficult. Vaguely cogitating, he lighted the candle and a cigar and began to unpack his grip. Then a slight scuffle of slippers preceded a voice—

"Hullo, ole chap, what you want to do?"

The stranger turned his head to see the queer guide of the beach episode in the center of the room.

"What the devil do you want?"

"All right, ole chap, don't you get all worked up!" retorted the man. "I am Rabbit—'strawdin'ry man. Yessir. Guide, 'osopher an' friend! Yessir. You no want guide?"

"No, I don't," returned the stranger shortly but with a slight smile, which Rabbit was quick to observe.

"No want guide, huh? 'Strawdin'ry. All right. P'raps you want 'osopher, rather?"

The smile deepened. The man sat on the rickety chair. Rabbit advanced.

"All right, no want 'osopher you want friend, yes, whaat?"

For a moment the two regarded each other steadily. Said the owner of the red beard:

"You seem to be an unusual creature! And, as it happens, I certainly do want a friend."

"Awf'lly jolly," asserted Rabbit joyfully and sank comfortably upon the bed. "I know you want friend 'cause you just same my awf'lly friend Pum'kin." Then anxiously, "You know him, whaat?"

"Pum'kin?" The stranger leaned back as if interested. "Who, may I inquire, is Pum'kin—and also what?"

"Whaat? Pum'kin, I tell you, my awf'lly friend. Yessir. He just same you but more small. One time he call me green baboon, I call him Pum'kin 'cause him hair just same red like you."

"H'm. And didn't he break your neck?"

"Neck? No break neck! Rabbit Riff man, yessir." Then confidentially, "I say, ole chap, you got smoke, whaat?"

The stranger's eyelids flickered. But a cigar was given to Rabbit.

"Thanks awf'lly! Awf'lly bally good,

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whaat? I say, ole chap, what you want to do? You go huntin', whaat?"

"No, I'm not going hunting; that is, not hunting game."

"What you want hunt?"

"I hunt— Well, I hunt heads."

Rabbit threw the match on to the floor and stared perplexedly.

"You awf'lly bally funny, ole chap, but how you hunt heads, whaat?"

"Yours is quite an interesting head."

"Head o' mine! Wha— You want my head? Whaffor?"

The red mustache twitched.

"I measure heads. I don't eat them."

"'Easure? Whaat 'easure? Whaffor? What business you do?"

"I'm an ethnologist."

"'Nogolist? 'Nogolist? I dunno that genelman. But whaat you do for business? What you name?"

"My name's O'Gorman, John P. O'Gorman, and my business is— Well, I'm a professor of anthropology for an American museum. Now are you wiser?"

"'Fessor! You 'fessor!" exclaimed Rabbit joyfully. "But you also 'Merican, huh? I speak 'Merican. Fine! Bully! Punk! Oh, boy!"

"So I observe," remarked Professor O'Gorman dryly. "Where did you learn it?"

"I tell you my friend Pum'kin he tell me. Fine, huh?"

"Positively astonishing."

"Sure. 'Stonishin'! 'Stonishin'!"

"What did your awf'lly friend do, by the way?"

"What business he do, huh? He come 'long look for mine, but he find woman 'cause Allah no love him."

"Found a woman instead of a mine, eh?" O'Gorman smiled. "Your Allah must have a sense of humor."

"Humor? You just wait. P'raps Allah he send you woman."

"God forbid!" said the giant smiling. "A mining engineer, I suppose? Did you work for him?"

"Sure. We work. We have some time. Oh, boy!"

"H'm." O'Gorman regarded Rabbit meditatively. "You appear to have some imagination at all events. Do you want a job?"

"Job? Sure! Whaffor I come see my friend? I go 'long you hunt heads, huh?"

"Perhaps. Come and see me in the morning. Now, good night!"

"Good night! Whaffor? You no come 'long 'muse——"

O'Gorman pulled his chair around.

"Get out!" said he. "I'll see you tomorrow."

"All right, ole chap, but whaffor you want me go 'long?"

O'Gorman turned his head and looked Rabbit straight in the eyes.

"Merely because I wish it."

"Fine! You—you awf'lly wise man!" he was assured. "What more better than do what you want when you want, huh? You awf'lly, awf'lly wise man. Sure. Good night, 'Fessor."

The professor chuckled, then abruptly turned his head and called—

"Rabbit!"

"Hullo, ole chap?"

"Do you live here in Mazagan?"

"I come from Tanga, but I live in mountain. I hillman. Anas Rabat ibn Busselham el Hero. Awf'lly fren' o' mine call me Rabbit. Yessir. This dirty place I live 'long fren' o' mine."

"Think you can find a place for me?"

"Sure. You come 'long me sleep just same brother."

"That's good," said O'Gorman rising. "This place stinks too much. I prefer honest Arab!"

"Fine!" assented Rabbit. "Arab smell more better than bally insect, 'Fessor, huh?"

II

IN THE still air of the morning between sunrise and the stirring of the daily breeze, the call of the *muezzin* vibrated as delicately as the exploring strand of a spider's web in a puff of wind. John O'Gorman sighed and, pushing a blanket from his great shoulders, sat up to look out of the little whitewashed room into the blue-and-white-tiled patio with a square pool of water in the center, listening.

"By the lord, it's good to hear that again," he commented to himself in the manner of the walker in solitudes. "Mother Africa calls, and I obey. 'Came the soft pant of bellows and low guttural voices.' Rabbit!"

"Hullo, ole chap! You sleep, huh?

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Fine!" Rabbit slithered across the patio with two tall glasses of Moorish coffee. "Now what you want to do?"

"You'd better scare up those mules, and we'll go along to Azzimour and to see your friend the alcaide. I want to get away as early as possible."

"Mule he all scared up, 'Fessor! Fine, huh? When you want go, we go."

"Good. Now request the ladies to retire to their own quarters while I make the best of opportunity in the way of a bath."

Five minutes later Rabbit was "requesting" the ladies of his friend's harem to "retire" in the voice of a driver rounding up a bunch of cattle.

The previous night the two had sat up until the second call to prayer discussing details of O'Gorman's requirements, finally deciding, upon a suggestion from Rabbit, that they go to Azzimour, a town some few miles away, where lived the governor of the province of Azzimour, one Caid Abdullah ibn Glawi, a half-brother of El Glawi, the great chieftain of the southern mountain tribes, Lord of the Atlas.

An hour later O'Gorman and Rabbit, mounted upon fat mules as large as their brethren from Missouri, loped at the tireless one-two-three through the water-gate and along the sand-dunes.

An hour beyond the track swept away from the sea, passing a few shepherds and cactus-girt hovels. Farther inland the sand gave gradually to soil, and presently the undulating land was green with barley, poppy-scattered, above which, a quivering comma in the incandescent blue, thrilled a lark.

Twice, rising to a crest of the winding track, they glimpsed that treasure chest of sapphires strung with scattered pearls which was the sea. Once more they plowed a hill, which gave abruptly into ankle sand, and saw away beneath a glistening shape hugging with jealous pride a tiny strip of blue, a sight that seemed more like a mirage than a city.

As they came down on to the river, they saw a group of feluccas, with their lateen sails, clustered against great sloping walls. Down narrow streets a few feet wide clattered the two. Upon the far side of the little town, after traversing the barrier of a great garden—which was, Rabbit said, the grounds of the governor—they came to the inevitable modest gate in a blank wall.

A mighty and patient hammering upon the nail-studded door succeeded in arousing a lazy guttural voice within. After a lengthy harangue the guardian was persuaded to open the door a space to admit the clamorous intruder. Rabbit slipped within, leaving O'Gorman to use his world-won patience in admiring from the saddle the vista of flat-top roofs blotched with green tree tops.

A cigar served to reconcile the waste of time and also to whet the curiosity of passing Moors, who stopped to stare at the infidel's devil ways. But the quest of an audience with a governor appeared to be as long-winded a job in Morocco as seeking an interview with any political boss in the States. At length Rabbit returned with the valuable information that Es-sid was amusing himself with the ladies of the harem in the gardens and therefore could not be disturbed.

"Perfectly natural and, moreover, exquisitely candid!" commented the professor. "A younger civilization would have been wasting its vigor over state documents, no doubt. Well, Rabbit, suppose we seek the nearest hotel with the purpose of absorbing a sufficient quantity of proteids for our sustenance."

"Sus-tence?" queried Rabbit. "Sustence?"

"Yes, vulgarly called food,"

"Ah, food! Sure. You come 'long me. But I say, ole chap, what lang'age him? Why you no talk English, huh?"

"Your education," said the professor with a twitching mustache, "has been neglected almost as much as the average American's."

"*Rrrrghl*" said Rabbit to his mule. Then to O'Gorman: "Whaffor you talk just same 'diculous idjut? Mohammed, he say man who talk idjut words no want food."

"Irony, Rabbit," returned the professor, "is merely a lubricant to the mental machinery in the heavy sands of stupidity."

"Sure!" assented Rabbit cheerfully. "Now I know why you 'fessor. Just same Moor man 'fessor—he always want make words no man un'erstand 'cept him, an' he not know what he want to say. Oh, you 'strawdin'ry 'fessor!"

"Excellent definition, Rabbit," said O'Gorman. "Now get a hustle on and scare up some grub!"

"Fine!" said Rabbit, grinning. "When

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you talk punk, you no get grub; when you talk just same, you goin' get 'strawdin'ry grub. Un'erstand?"

"You bet I do!" said the professor, laughing. "Most philosophers get that treatment, anyway. Sorry, Rabbit, I'll be good!"

Into a *fondak*—caravansary—near the river-gate Rabbit led the professor, where in one of the little cell-like rooms they squatted on mats and were provided with Moorish tea, followed by the mutton *cous-cous*—much enjoyed by the professor after his last meal flavored with rancid oil. When the meal was done and a gaunt individual had brought the usual brass bowl for the laving of fingers and mouth, Rabbit suggested that they take a siesta.

"No," said the energetic American. "We'll go back and hunt up your governor friend."

"No good," said Rabbit. "Governor, he sleep after he play with his womans. Moor man fashion. He no want see us till sunset."

"All right, then. You have your siesta, Rabbit, and I'll take a stroll around to see what is to be seen."

"You no stroll round just your ownsel', 'cause Moor man he no like see 'nfidel clothes."

"Nonsense, Rabbit!" said the giant, rising. "I know how to look after myself. No—you stop where you are! I'll come back in a couple of hours."

"Wise man, 'Fessor, huh?" demanded Rabbit. "If Moor man make you dead one, you no make big fuss, huh?"

"No—I won't make a noise about it, Rabbit," agreed O'Gorman, smiling.

"All right, 'Fessor," assented Rabbit, tolerantly reclining upon his rug. "We see what come out of him!"

"That's a bet!"

CIGAR in full blast, O'Gorman proceeded to stroll around the streets after taking the bearings of the café to the gray river-gate. In the street of the shops, beneath an awning of ragged mats spread from roof to roof, business at this time of the day was slack.

On the counters of the tiny booths, piled with heaps of spices, cloths or fruit, fat and bearded Moors squatted dozing; the richer had retired to the comfort of their homes, leaving the shop in charge of a young assistant or a slave, who promptly curled up and slept profoundly.

The pungent, spicy, garbagy smell of the Orient was as perfume to O'Gorman's nostrils, reminiscent of his wanderings from Peking to the Gulf of Aden in his pursuit of the various curiosities known as man. Down winding lanes of blank walls with tiny windows set on high, suggesting mysteries of the "Arabian Nights" and gardens from which trickled the sound of fountains, he wandered until he came unexpectedly upon another river-gate.

Three sleepy guards, heavy with *kief* dreams, eyed his great figure, mumbled a good-humored greeting and muttered to themselves upon the wondrous height and color of the Nazarene.

Away down the river, dancing in the heat glare, he could see a *dhow*, an oblique smudge in the smother of foam on the bar—the same bar, shifted a few yards, maybe, that had caressed the prows of the Roman barges. To the left ran a high blank wall of some wealthy Moor's gardens, the roots deep in the yellow sand; to his right the Portuguese embattled fortifications jutted out upon a shoal of the river.

The sluggish water sucked lazily. Away on the other side was a sailing speck, a hawk in the incandescent blue sky. Not a body stirred.

He wandered along the sandy beach examining the state of preservation of the walls, a testimony to the ancient method of building. Alongside the old mole were tied several of the lateen fishing-boats; larger *dhows* were anchored in mid-stream.

On the edge of the mole he sat down, lighted another cigar and, basking in the sun, began dreamily to reconstruct the life of other days when those old ramparts were patrolled by swarthy small men in half armor and halberd, watching with anxious eyes in the green light of dawn for the dust of an approaching Arab foray.

And before them had been the Romans, whose signets of conquest were scattered along the coast and away in the interior beyond Fez and Marakeesh to the Atlas. Each was a moldering stone epitaph of a bloody fight of the sturdy legionaries against the original Berbers, these hill-tribes from whom Rabbit had sprung, who had been driven into the hills and had the yoke of Mohammedanism forced upon their stiff necks—

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where ever since it had remained somewhat uneasily.

Where were the Romans, the Portuguese? Don Gracia Estralla Martinez and the rancid Lopez of the hotel the haughty representatives of the conquerors! And now the French. First the mailed fist, then the yard-measure—"*pénétration pacifique*"—and in some remote period to come—"*pénétration poétique!*"

The professor grinned at his own idealism.

Idly desiring to see the vista up-river, he rose and trolled along the mole around the outer bastion. As he approached the corner, his eyes caught a flutter of cloth; a step and he was facing a gaunt-faced Moor holding an enormous pistol to his head. He grasped the situation and the import of guttural demand.

With unexpected speed for such a big man, O'Gorman's long leg shot up, sending the muzzle-loader twirling in the air. O'Gorman side-stepped, caught the man's loose *jelab*, twisted it around the dagger arm and then, closing, gave him a rapid half-Nelson. The bandit met the stone battlements and stopped there in a crumpled heap.

"——!" muttered the professor after examination. "I've broken his fool neck! Now there'll be a —— of a row, which may probably work upon the racial prejudice of Rabbit's friend. H'm."

He stood up and gazed about. Not a body stirred.

"Deplorable," muttered the professor. "Most distinctly deplorable! Self-defense undoubtedly. H'm. Still——"

He picked up the crumpled body, propped it against the wall, removed the rope turban and, drawing a pair of instruments from his pocket, carefully measured the skull.

"H'm," he muttered disappointedly. "Type sub-dolichocephalous—very ordinary. H'm. Pity." He gazed speculatively at the river. "Better so, I suppose."

Raising the corpse, he gently thrust it into the water.

"However, I will keep this ancient pistol as proof of criminal intent. Nobody could accuse a good American of carrying such a weapon, anyway. Dear, dear, how foolish people are! It was like taking candy from a kid!"

HALF an hour later the professor discovered Rabbit sleeping stertorously.

"Hullo, ole chap!" greeted Rabbit. "You have good time, whaat?"

"Fine!" said the professor.

Rabbit gazed at him suspiciously.

"Whaffor you make your whisker run 'bout?" he demanded.

"You're seeing things, Rabbit," assured the professor. "Now come along and wake up that friend of yours, or else we sha'n't get back before dark."

"You all scared brig'nd person, huh?" insinuated Rabbit rising. "You no get all worked up, ole chap. Rabbit he look after you."

"Thanks very much, Rabbit!" said O'Gorman solemnly.

This time they discovered the governor of Azzimour freed from his domestic duties. He received them sitting cross-legged on the porch of his gardens, a gray-bearded Moor of ample girth, betokening a sufficiency of worldly goods. The professor squatted opposite to him while Rabbit upon his right conducted the interview.

In order to avoid difficult explanations to account for a crazy infidel's mania to measure people's heads, Rabbit deftly twisted the object of the professor's visit into a desire to learn something of the infinite wisdom of the Moor which might be incorporated into a book by the red-bearded *talib*—writer in the old English sense—of the infidel *Ullema*—holy college—for the benefit of the scholars of Europe.

After considerable discourse about and around the subject the matter was arranged to the satisfaction of both parties by a subtle hint from Rabbit that a certain weighty bag would be doubtless found when the infidel had departed.

But just when this affair had been concluded and they were about to make their orthodox adieux, a commotion began without the walls of the garden. At a mumbled command the gate was opened to admit one of the clamoring multitude, who, kneeling at the governor's feet, kissed the hem of his robe and panted out the tale of a discovery made by his righteous family of the body of a much beloved cousin in the river with the neck broken, which on the authority of the Koran could have been done only by a malignant jinnee of the infidels; a dastardly murder, for the sake of gain, of a young man

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renowned as a courageous warrior, a good father, charitable, pious and of unimpeachable honesty, well beloved of Allah, the All Compassionate, Wise.

While the remainder of the late lamented brigand's virtues were being extolled, Rabbit translated to the professor.

"Now you 'c'lect what I tell you, 'Fessor?" he whispered. "You want go 'long stroll by your ownsel', an' now Moor man he want say you kill wonnerful Moor man!"

"Quite true!" admitted O'Gorman. "I surely did kill him."

"Whaat!" exclaimed Rabbit. "You kill 'strawdin'ry fightin' man!"

" 'Strawdin'ry nothing!" said O'Gorman, smiling, and whispered the story to Rabbit.

"Whaat!" gasped Rabbit incredulously. "You throw him brig'nd over your back an' break him neck! You—you—oh boy! You just same my awf'lly brother!"

"But how do they know that I did it?"

"Did it? Sure they know. Bally insect he no break neck bally insect. Moor man cut with knife. 'Sides, Koran want say 'nfidel he do just same that. Un'erstand?"

He turned enthusiastically to the governor and overwhelmed the other supplicant with a volume of gutturals.

"But how are you going to fix it?" demanded O'Gorman.

"You shut your head!" admonished Rabbit swiftly. "I make talk; you look pretty. Un'erstand? Buy him governor nice fat mule. He like mule more better than he like young man!"

"Considerably cheaper than the Salic law!" commented the professor.

"No Salic," corrected Rabbit. "He only bally insect. No b'long this place. He come from inside. Gov'nor he want give us friends o' him go back Mazagan c'lect mule; un'erstand, 'fessor?"

After an hour of guttural hubbub before a graven sphinx of a judge the indignant relative of the corpse whipped out a sword and kissed it, uttering passionate words.

"He make swear word with Allah he get you," whispered Rabbit cheerfully. "He do that just same 'strawdin'ry fightin' man 'cause of him friends. What you call him? Hot air! Yessir."

Rabbit thereupon began his address to the court, which so infuriated the accuser that he attempted the life of the opposing counsel. The plaintiff was then removed by order of the court, and the defendant was honorably acquitted.

III

IN THE glare of heat white roofs and tall square towers amid green palms floated on an incandescent lake against purple mountains which shimmered and heaved in a blanched sky. Along a heavy trail plodded a powerful black barb bearing a tall man whose white robes draped freckled features adorned with a beard like molten brass.

Beside him upon an iron-gray animal with a sweeping mane, nonchalantly rode Rabbit, a cigaret growing like a white palm in the tufted field of his face; the fez cap was as ever on a corner of his head and the gray *jelab* clung precariously to his left shoulder.

Some hundred yards behind them dragged wearily gaunt pack-mares, loaded with bulky panniers as well as the ragged-turbaned riders hunched upon the flat pack-saddles. They rode in silence as men at the end of a long trail. Now and again Rabbit would gaze curiously at the face of his companion, fumble for another cigaret and gaze again.

"I say, 'Fessor, ole chap," he remarked conversationally at length. " 'Merica awf'lly long way from Mazagan, huh?"

"It certainly is," admitted O'Gorman. "About fifteen times as far as from Mazagan to Marakeesh—and where I come from is about as far again."

"By Sinfooloosir!" ejaculated Rabbit, impressed. "Awf'lly 'strawdin'ry! Your father he no come one time to land of Moor man, huh?"

"No, I guess not!" said O'Gorman, smiling. "And I don't think he's likely to."

" 'Strawdin'ry!" commented Rabbit. " 'Strawdin'ry! Awf'lly 'strawdin'ry!"

"Why is there anything extraordinary about it?"

Rabbit gazed hard at the professor's face.

" 'Strawdin'ry!" he persisted. "You just same Moor man. Man he no hear you talk he think you hillman sure. 'Strawdin'ry!"

"But Moors are not as fair as I am, Rabbit."

"Sure he got red whisker. Plenty man. Plenty womans. You see Marakeesh. Moor man live on shore no more better

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Moor man. Look me," added Rabbit, and he bared his upper arm, which was nearly as white as O'Gorman's.

"True, but you come from the Riff, Rabbit. They are a different race, the Berbers."

"Oulad Shila, huh? Sure. But plenty Shila inside. No truly Moor man he mix up with black man who mix with Arab from El Masr." (El Masr is Cairo.)

"That's true. And, by the way, Rabbit, do you know where you do come from, you Berbers?"

"Where we come from 'fore we come 'long here Moghreb el Aksa (the West), huh? I dunno. Wise man he say one thing; wise man he say 'nother. Me, I think we come here when Sid Nuah (Noah) send us 'long from big boat (the ark). What 'nfidel wise man say?"

"He doesn't know either, Rabbit. Some anthropologists think you are an offshoot of the Greeks who came along from Carthage. Certainly a lot of you have distinctly Greek characteristics and customs in some instances."

"Greek? Greek? You want say *Ed-Dorik*, huh? I know him. He 'nfidel fight with Mohammed man long time. One time he no want have any Allah; he think awf'lly good make prayers to won'erful stone womans, pictures an' won'erful po'try, just same Sidi Hammo make—only more better, huh? You no think that all right, huh?"

The professor laughed and stared at Rabbit.

"Where do you get that idea?"

" 'Dea? I getim out head o' mine, 'cause I read plenty 'dea in book. I ed'cated man."

"What books?" demanded the professor almost eagerly.

"Book Mohammed man he write. 'Talian man, French man. I read him one book—'Sappho.' Won'erful 'strawdin'ry book. Yessir."

"Good heavens! You read 'Sappho'?"

"Sure I read him. Won'erful womans. Oh, boy! Whaffor you laugh?"

"Sorry, Rabbit, but I never suspected such an esthetic taste."

" 'Thetic taste? 'Thetic taste? Sure, I got 'thetic taste. I like bew'ful womans. You like bew'ful womans, huh? I like more better won'erful po'try. I know you," he added sagely. "You think, 'cause I guide, I 'strawdin'ry brig'nd—I no 'thetic taste, huh? I like drink one, two, three bottle wine. Fine! But no drink won'erful *liqueur* just the same. I like drink won'erful *liqueur* just liddle—just won'erful 'strawdin'ry kiss, 'cause truly won'erful kiss just like Allah tickle your head an' you want die 'cause you so awf'lly glad, huh? Just same with won'erful po'try."

THE floating city of Marakeesh appeared to ground on the surrounding plain like a yacht left by the tide upon a mud-bank. Cantering and walking, they came within an hour to the thousand-year-old walls, embrasured for archers, and passed through the cool shadows of a great gate from the grim towers of which many an infidel had been dropped on grappling hooks a dozen feet beneath to the amusement and enthusiasm of a chanting populace.

In the broad squares, dominated by the white Byzantine minarets, the professor's likeness to a Moor of the hills was verified by the fact that none of the teeming crowds of turbaned Moors and head-roped mountaineers as much as cast a second glance at him.

At the house of a merchant to whom Rabbit bore a letter, they halted. The usual ponderous announcement upon the great gate was followed by the voice of the chief eunuch shouting instructions to the ladies to seek their quarters.

After the necessary wait while these precautions were fulfilled, they were received in the guest chamber and regaled upon sweet tea and sweeter pasties, while the host waded through the extensive greeting respecting the ultimate fate of the soul of the recipient, the various members of his august family and all that therein was, of a formal Moorish letter.

Sid Ahmed then removed his English steel-rimmed spectacles, smiled at O'Gorman and most courteously bade him welcome to his house and to all it contained.

After more polite conversation they were informed that a house was placed at their disposal. The professor was at length conducted across the courtyard, through a garden wall and into another tiled courtyard, where a fountain whispered refreshingly.

Naturally, the professor, in spite of his world experience, evinced the national

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inclination to get things moving. But Rabbit, indulgently shocked, pointed out that a great person such as El Glawi, the Lord of the Atlas, was not to be visited as if he were merely a senator, but that etiquette demanded in the first instance that they should send their cards in the form of the inevitable present; after which El Glawi would solicitously wait three days for the honorable travelers to recover from the ardors of the journey. And after that—well, within a few more days, when his Es-Sidi was not dispensing justice, engaged in political intrigues or playing with his women in the garden and happened not to have anybody of particular importance to torture or slaughter, he would be pleased to receive the strange infidel.

And so it was. The professor, aware of the futility of attempting to reform other people, particularly Orientals, proceeded to pass the time as well as possible. To his annoyance, when he wished to ride around with Rabbit or alone, he discovered that the Glawi—in the name of a bodyguard of honor—had thrust upon him twenty wild and very hungry horsemen, each of whom had to be entertained.

Fortunately, as if to prove that his prospective host was not unmindful, a couple of sheep and several fowls and eggs arrived each morning.

On the seventh day came the summons. Rabbit, acting valet, insisted upon the professor dressing up in the finest raiment to be had: voluminous trousers of emerald green, many undergarments of white linen and a tunic of peacock blue, beautifully embroidered—which, nevertheless, was permitted only to peep coyly through an aperture at the throat in the *jelab*. The whole dress was covered by a fine-spun woolen *silham* and high boots of yellow leather, worked in scarlet, green and gold.

"Well, I'm all dolled up now," commented the professor when the last fold had been adjusted to Rabbit's satisfaction.

"Oh, boy!" ejaculated Rabbit, standing back to view the figure, nearly seven feet high with the hood over the high fez cap and immaculate rolled turban. "You perfec'ly disgus'in', won'erful, awf'lly bally, 'strawdin'ry Moor man chief. Sure, you all dolled up!"

As they clattered down the cobbled streets toward El Glawi's palace with the cavorting escort at their heels, O'Gorman on his snorting black barb in crimson saddlery certainly did look as if he were a Prince of the Saladin. Moors and hillmen in plenty turned to admire and wonder whence the passing chief with the beard of molten brass had come.

At a gate as large as the city gates they dismounted and were led across a cobbled square like a barrack-yard, through a small door into gardens and so to a whitewashed porch bathed in the rose-glow of the sinking sun. Cross-legged on a rug sat the Lord of the Atlas, in white.

The professor's first impression was that by some extraordinary mistake a Mongol was awaiting him; closer observation proved that the eyes in the shadow of the hood were elongated and the sallow features had cheek-bones almost as prominent as a Thibetan; the drooping mustaches, the thinness of the beard and the length of the face added to the illusion.

For a moment the professor was so absorbed in this phenomenon that he forgot instructions in the matter of etiquette and ejaculated enthusiastically:

"Dolichocephalous—most perfect type I've ever seen. Perfectly splendid! But how on earth am I going to get him?"

A violent jerk upon his *jelab* recalled him to his duties. The man's dark, smoldering eyes, yet as cold as the sea under starlight, were regarding him. Rabbit, kneeling, was mumbling apparently an introduction. The professor bowed and at a gesture from Rabbit was about to squat upon a round cushion thrust near him by an attendant when El Glawi mumbled a command:

"You no sit down!" adjured Rabbit. "Glawi he want look at you. He say you won'erful man!"

O'Gorman was embarrassed. A violent desire to sit down or to roar with laughter possessed him. Even professorial curiosity could not control his eyes, which dropped as bashfully as a débutante's. A glance showed him that El Glawi was still regarding him—but with no more visible expression than a Japanese mask.

"——!" growled O'Gorman wriggling from one foot to the other like a boy at graduation. "For God's sake, let me sit down!"

And, as forthwith he did squat upon the

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cushion, a swift glance caused him to suspect that at some remote period of his life El Glawi must have smiled.

AFTER compliments, as an Arabic letter says, which lasted about half an hour, Rabbit proceeded to get to business. This time the object of the visit was again altered. One who sought to sit at the feet of the wise man of the East would desire to go to the college at Fez or to the seat of the *Ullena*—holy college—at Tafilat beyond the Atlas. So the wily Rabbit, quick to snatch at an idea, spoke with forensic eloquence upon the infidel's theory that the tribes were descended from *Ed-Dorik* and that, consequently, the red giant wished to visit the best specimens of the hill people who, as all the world knew, were those followers of the Lord of the Atlas, Favorite of Allah the Beneficent, Knowing. At the mention of the Greeks El Glawi eyed O'Gorman speculatively and mumbled a question.

"Glawi, he want know whether *Ed-Dorik* were just same you?" interpreted Rabbit.

"Well," hesitated the professor, "tell him that they had developed the most beautiful type of man and woman known to history."

"Sure," agreed Rabbit. "But he know all that. He want know if they look just same you?"

"Tell him that they were much finer specimens than I."

Rabbit mumbled away rapidly. The ghost of a smile flitted across the smoldering eyes of El Glawi as one long lean finger was projected from a gaunt hand and waggled horizontally.

"He say no more better than you," reported Rabbit. Then swiftly, "Don't make you whisker run 'bout, 'cause he see."

"That's ridiculous," murmured O'Gorman.

"No ridiculous!" said Rabbit sharply. "You shut your head an' listen what he want say!"

El Glawi mumbled on again.

"He want say that he awf'lly sure you quite right, ole chap! Hillman he come one time from *Ed-Dorik*. Sure. Fine, huh?"

"What causes him to suspect that?" demanded the professor eagerly. "Is there any evidence?"

"Sure. Plenty ev'dence. He say plenty his people just same you. An' don't you make your eye whisker run 'bout, 'cause he think you wild!" adjured Rabbit *sotto voce* as the professor frowned. "He say he want give you words to caid o' him in mountains who just same you red whisker. But plenty his people more better than caid; he more small; not so won'erful bally 'strawdin'ry! Un'erstand?"

"Yes. Tell him that I thank him very much indeed."

A rapid flow of gutturals was followed by slower words from El Glawi, who clapped his hands softly.

"He say," said Rabbit as a black attendant appeared from the violet twilight, "that you most won'erful man. He love your red whisker an' 'cause your red whisker he want give you awf'lly jolly sword for present."

As solemnly as the occasion seemed to demand, the professor bowed and instructed Rabbit to convey his thanks. They sat in profound silence while O'Gorman grew more embarrassed by the half curious, half inquiring gaze of El Glawi. O'Gorman began to fidget, wondering what was supposed to happen.

"Aren't we to go, Rabbit?" he demanded at length.

"Can it!" snapped Rabbit *sotto voce*. "You no un'erstand. Moor man make pretty word, an', when bally insect he bring sword, you no want grab it! You want do just same if he want give you toothpick, un'erstand?"

"I get you!" murmured the professor, trying to restrain his whiskers from running about.

The big black appeared and laid at the feet of the professor a scimitar in a silver scabbard with a handle studded with crudely cut gems. O'Gorman attempted to follow instructions by not looking at the handsome weapon while El Glawi spoke.

"He say make you nice wish; he say he ask Allah special to give you plenty blood to wash small liddle knife, an' he say he send you 'strawdin'ry letter for caid o' him, an' he ask Mohammed let him come soon to mountains an' see you. An' he say to you just same he say to Mohammed man—he hope peace be with you! Don't you go say nothin'. You make nice bow, an' you get up—an' don't you want fall down over your dress, uner'stand? I take liddle knife, an' you walk back side first till you find your slipper, un'erstand?"

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As solemnly as possible the professor bowed, rose to his feet, bowed again, walked sidewise to the edge of the veranda, where he retrieved his slippers, and stalked out with Rabbit bearing the sword by his side.

"Fine, 'Fessor!" Rabbit assured him as soon as they mounted. "Glawi, he love you just same brother!"

"H'm," said the professor. "He's got a wonderful type of head. I must get him."

"You getim Glawi!" gasped Rabbit. "You wild, huh?"

"Wild or no, that's the most wonderful head I've seen here!"

At that moment the vague form of a man darted out of a deep shadow. Rabbit made his horse bound forward as at the same time the escort swooped around them, followed by a guttural curse, a cry.

"What the devil's all that about?" demanded O'Gorman when Rabbit drew up beside him again.

"That bally insect, he want put liddle knife in you," explained Rabbit nonchalantly.

"In me? What on earth for? Because I'm an infidel?"

"You won'erful man just same him Glawi he say!" explained Rabbit admiringly. "You break neck o' man an' you forget just same Moor man liddle thing like that! Fine!"

"What! A friend of that —— brigand at Azzimour?"

"Sure. He come 'long 'hind us; all time look for you. He in Mazagan all time. He in caravan we pass on road. Him man make swear-word get you."

"Why the mischief didn't you tell me?"

"Whaat, 'Fessor, ole chap? Make truly words, I scared p'raps you want get all worked up!" answered Rabbit apologetically.

IV

THREE weeks later they clattered through another ancient gate into a walled town on the lower southern slopes of the Atlas Mountains, a town if possible a trifle more entombed in the dust and garbage of ages and swarming with Moors with a more pronounced negroid strain in their features and color.

Surrounded by the Glawi's escort, they pranced through streets narrow and broad, shouting bellicosely to clear the way for the red chieftain beside whom rode Rabbit, scarcely less splendid in costume and dignity.

"Heavens!" muttered the professor as they swept through the crowd in a market place, scattering urchins, beggars, water-bearers, shrouded women on either side like a fire-engine rushing down Broadway, "this is positively exhilarating. Arouses and satisfies somewhere within me the vanity of a tribal chieftain riding down the populace: the tickling of the primitive love of power. H'm!"

They dashed down a narrow lane and out into an oblong sandy place, girded with crumbling walls, where the escort wrenched back their animals upon their haunches in the beloved Moorish manner of showing off. While the professor was dismounting, the chief of the escort thundered mightily upon a great nail-studded gate.

A small door opened, from which emerged a cluster of wild-looking soldiery, their tufts of hair in the mountain fashion protruding like elf locks from under their dirty white turbans, to stare curiously at the party. After a brief exchange of salutes the *Kiathatha* disappeared with the letter from El Glawi.

"Come 'long, 'Fessor, ole chap; we wait," suggested Rabbit and squatted down upon the sand with his back against the wall, prepared in the native way to wait a few hours or more.

"Is this where our future host lives?" inquired the professor, following suit.

"He no want live here. This just same shop o' him."

"Office, city hall, is that it?"

"Sure. City hall. He live back side this place in big gardens awf'lly jolly big, 'cause he big man, huh?"

"I see. Caid you mean?"

"No, he more better than caid, 'cause he holy man too: he liddle sultan all of this side o' mountains for way 'long Sûs country."

"But I understood that the Glawi was Lord of the Atlas?"

"Sure. He lord all right."

"Kind of suzerain over this fellow, I suppose. He pays him a fief—taxes, is that right?"

"Tax? Sure. When he want."

"When he wants! What happens when he doesn't want?"

"When he no want him, Glawi he come 'long with him wild soldier man an' he talk

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with him. Most time he do that 'cause this man just same all mans—he no want pay."

"Oh, my lord!" exclaimed the professor. "He has to perambulate around the mountains collecting taxes with an army, is that the idea? But what about the big sultan at Fez? I suppose the Glawi pays him and these other chiefs collect and pay him, is that it?"

"Pay? He no want pay, I tell you. Sultan one time ev'ry year—p'raps one time two year—he go 'long his soldier c'lect tax."

"But can't the sultan send a deputy?"

"One man go for him, huh? Wise man he no do that. One time ole Sultan Mulai Hassan, he do just same that, an' his fren', Mohammed ben Nebbhi, he get plenty dollar, an' then he want go Mazagan see great fren'. An', when he get Mazagan, some one tell him 'bout Paris awf'lly good for 'nfidel; so he think he want go 'long, too."

"What? And went on a spree, I suppose?"

"Sure, he go on spree. But no fool man, 'cause he want come back 'cause then he no want to talk with sultan. So 'fore he go he hide plenty *douro* in desert."

"What happened then?"

"He wait till ole man sultan dead one, then he come an' dig up, *douro* an' now he live Tanga with plenty wifes what he want, an' new sultan no talk with him 'cause he subject *Français*. Fine, huh? Now you come 'long. *Kiathaha* he want us."

As they approached the great gate, the professor noticed that the *Kiathaha* had quite a tawny beard and that one of the soldiers was extremely fair. Following instructions, the professor merely grunted as fiercely as he knew how and ignored the polite welcome of the *Kiathaha*, who eyed his height and bearing curiously.

The escort was left behind, and they were led to a small house in the gardens, which was to be, they were informed, their temporary residence. The professor, recollecting the irritating etiquette of El Glawi's court, inquired when they were to be permitted to see the august host. He was told for his pains that the Shareef Mohammed Abu Bekr would be pleased to see them when Allah willed it so. Which, being interpreted, means any time within ten minutes to a hundred years.

However, their equipment was brought to them with baskets of green figs, dates and chickens as presents. After a wash the professor settled down with his pipe and prepared to while away the evening by arranging hasty notes made on the trip. Allah, however, through the personal intercession of Mohammed, according to Rabbit, thought good to take into blessed consideration the ungodly impatience of the American temperament; for, about an hour after the afternoon call to prayer had faded sonorously upon the warm air, a messenger arrived with an intimation to prepare to join the Beloved Slave of Allah at the evening meal.

IN SPITE of the professor's protests Rabbit insisted upon summoning a barber to shave and clip him in the orthodox style; the beard is trimmed solidly square, and its edges and the mustache and around the lips as well are shaved for about a quarter of an inch, bestowing an artificial effect rather suggestive of the ancient Egyptian style. Then, when he had been meticulously dressed under Rabbit's supervision in the town clothes of Marakeesh with the Glawi's jeweled scimitar bulging ominously beneath the *jelab*, the American was indistinguishable from an orthodox Mohammedan. New heelless slippers of yellow leather as soft as kid, in which it is an acquired art to move comfortably, were adjusted. Followed another rehearsal of the formal greeting.

"Not awf'lly bally fine!" criticized Rabbit diffidently. "Now you try one more time!"

"No! I'm —— if I do!" revolted the professor. "My back aches. I guess I can operate on any of them now."

"Op'rate? Op'rate?" repeated Rabbit. "Sure. You op'rate all right if you no get crazy wild. Now you come 'long."

The pair, under the guidance of a huge Nubian slave carrying a domed lantern of colors, were led across the garden, past a tiny private mosque.

"How much farther?" growled O'Gorman, shuffling diligently with short mincing steps to accommodate his hobble-like robes. "I feel like a —— chicken trussed for a dime hop!"

"Don't you get all worked up!" admonished Rabbit. "Soon you come an' see your red brother, I tell you. Red brother he want kiss you. Sure."

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"—— he will!" muttered O'Gorman.

"You shut your head!" whispered Rabbit fiercely. "An' rec'lect whaat I tell you."

They arrived immediately in front of the group. Rabbit bowed profoundly, spoke gutturally and, as he bowed again, hissed *sotto voce* to the professor, who was standing bolt upright running professional eyes over the various heads—

"Get busy!"

Stricken to consciousness of his rôle, the professor bowed and extended his hand to the fellow of the red beard, whose small bright eyes were regarding him impassively. Their fingers just met; whereupon the professor, as rehearsed many times, brought the now-distinguished fingers to within six inches of his mouth and then placed them over his heart and bowed once more.

"Fine!" Rabbit whispered. "Now you op'rate on next man."

Solemnly the professor, entering a little into the comedy, "operated" upon each man in succession and then, on instructions from his cicerone, sat down as carefully as may be upon a cushion provided for him.

Then, while the remainder of the formal greeting between the host and the infidel guest continued by proxy and the general polite inquiries, young Nubian slaves, clad in bright trousers below bare torsos of ebony with limbs decked with silver bangles, brought in a great tray loaded with the implements for the making of tea: cones of sugar, bundles of fresh mint and a glowing brazier for a large copper kettle.

When the sugar had been broken and mixed with the tea and mint by the host, who personally tasted it to assure the correct flavor, tiny glasses were placed before each of the party. In spite of the temperature they immediately began to sup with much noise and energy.

After six of the prescribed glasses had been drunk, the girl slaves bore round a brass bowl of water and a basin with a perforated top with soap to lave the hands before eating, while more slaves bore in a great wooden platter containing an enormous roast of beef and native rolls of bread, which they placed in the center within easy reach of each guest. The host ceased a mumbled conversation with a friend and rolled out rich gutturals, ending in a heavily aspirated "Hhamdullahh!"

"He say to Allah, thank you, ole chap!" explained Rabbit.

Drilled by previous experience, the professor politely waited until the host had dug his nails well into the juicy fat and had wrenched off a morsel, which he threw deftly into a cavernous mouth. Then simultaneously the others began to fight for food, employing the right hand only.

"Now, 'Fessor," urged Rabbit, "you get busy an' eat plenty 'cause Moor man he think you not great chief if you no eat half beef."

"Why does he eat first?" queried the professor, clawing gamely at a piece of meat.

"Whaffor? 'Cos he want show beef all right—that he no want poison his friends. Moor man always he do just same that. Sure."

"Cheerful animal!" commented the professor, still tugging away. "Still, it had the same origin as the handshake after all. H'm. Ah! I've got him!" And triumphantly he popped a lump of beef into his mouth.

But he had to bolt the piece at the strange signs and guttural remarks of his host, who sat next to him.

"What's he want, Rabbit?"

"He very polite man. He want you eat piece o' beef he pick him very own self!"

Repressing his reluctance, the professor stretched forward his head to meet brown fingers which thrust with friendly vigor a large piece of juicy fat meat into his mouth and, apparently on the principle of turkey stuffing, considered it necessary to poke it well down, with the result that the professor choked.

"Whaffor you want to laugh?" demanded Rabbit in a fierce whisper. "Saint man he think you want laugh at him."

"I'm not—not laughing," spluttered the professor. "I'm—I'm crying, —— it!"

But Rabbit was lost in a flow of explanatory Arabic at which an amused smile crept into the solemn faces of the host and guests. The *shareef* refrained from further friendly offers; but the man opposite to him, with a wolfish face and black beard, appeared to think that Christian baiting was excellent sport, for he persisted in plying the victim with morsels of meat.

Whether conversation was considered inappropriate during the food-fight, or whether they were too lazy to shout above the noise of appreciative mastication, the professor did not know; but, save for

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urgent invitations to eat more and yet more, the conversation languished until the serving of the *cous-cous* and chicken.

Boiled chicken was easy of mastery, but the *cous-cous*—(semolina prepared by a steaming process into feathery globules like rice)—broke the iron will of O'Gorman and the Moorish politeness. For, each time he attempted, with the one hand permitted, to coax the *cous-cous* to rest in a ball on the joint of his thumb and index-finger as he knew was the method, the stuff would dissolve into a snow shower within one inch of his beard and move the host and guests to frank laughter, much to the relief of the professor, who, grinning, refused to perform for the benefit of the company.

Thus being tacitly excused from making a fool of himself, the professor fell to studying the faces about him. The host was the most interesting, but three of the others were possessed of heads, as far as he could determine beneath the hoods, of unusual skull formations in comparison to the general type of Moor. While he was regretfully wondering how he could think up a scheme to win permission to get his calipers to work, Rabbit broke in:

"*Shareef* he want know where your country an' how you get 'long Moor man country? I tell him you come on big ship, but he no want b'lieve that. He say ship too small 'cause sea full of devils just same Mohammed he say."

"Well, tell him it's a very big ship. You've seen them, Rabbit, at Gibraltar."

"Sure, I see 'em, 'Fessor, but he no want to b'lieve."

He turned to the host and talked volubly. But the red beard wagged incredulously.

"Whaat I tell you, 'Fessor? He no ed'cated man. I tell him ship awf'lly 'strawdin'ry large; tell him two brother on ship they loose each other an' they walk 'bout ship want hunt each self an' no find other man for seven year, an' he no want b'lieve!"

"Now what do you know about that!" said the professor, smiling.

"I no know nothin' 'bout that," retorted Rabbit solemnly. "I not on that ship. But must tell man somethin' when he no want to b'lieve, huh?"

"Splendid logic!" assured the professor.

"Sure. Fine 'strawdin'ry 'gic!" assented Rabbit and, turning, plunged into some more tales calculated to impress the unbelieving.

Interspersed by questions from the other Moors, the sweet pasties came and passed, and the young slaves again brought the paraphernalia for ablutions. Just as Rabbit was interpreting in his very own method the professor's attempt to explain the principles of democracy and the advantages of dispensing with a king, which they covertly considered to be entirely crazy—for, as Allah knows what may happen, it was always possible that any one might become, if not sultan, then an extortionate chief—the coffee arrived.

Borne on the great brass tray by a great Nubian were nine small glasses, which the professor observed were set in silver filigree work. Wondering whether they were of European manufacture as they appeared to be, he idly watched the Nubian hesitate in his choice between the last two glasses for the infidel.

"Now he want know how you want make all peoples king man when only few peoples ed'cated mans?"

"Tell him that in——"

"Subhan Allah!" yelled Rabbit violently and pointed over the head of the Moors.

They all turned automatically. As the professor, startled, stared in the direction indicated, he was conscious of a movement across his robes and caught a glimpse of Rabbit's hand swiftly changing the glasses of the host from one silver stand to the other while he continuously shouted at the top of his voice.

Then suddenly clutching at his head as if in terrible pain, Rabbit ceased and swayed backward. The Moors stared at him, mumbling inquiries. Rabbit groaned deeply, blinked and began to speak rapidly and rationally. The host muttered, and the others grumbled gutturally and gazed questioningly at each other.

Surreptitiously one man tapped his head, indicating that Rabbit was insane. Rabbit finished his harangue and picked up his coffee, smiling.

"What the devil's the matter?" began the professor.

"Shut your head!" commanded Rabbit sharply. "An' make large noises with your mouth! Get busy!"

Perplexed, the professor raised the glass to his lips. As he gulped a little of the scalding coffee, he was aware of the host's

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eyes regarding him intently. He obeyed Rabbit's injunctions to smack his lips with the most noise possible, echoed by Rabbit and the others about him. Again he grinned mechanically as he saw the host drain his glass at a gulp.

"Awf'lly jolly good coffee, huh?" demanded Rabbit and without waiting for an answer began to pay the host extravagant compliments.

As the professor was amusedly watching, he saw a change as if a dirty green veil had been drawn over the chief's features. Then the eyes appeared suddenly to loom through a mist with an expression of unquenchable hate; the right hand clutched spasmodically to his breast; the red mouth opened, emitted a squawk, and the man toppled over like an overset idol.

In the momentary silence the professor was aware of the distant chant of the *muezzin*.

"Mohammed er-rasool Al——"

The fading note was severed like a spider's thread by a harsh guttural cry from the Moor nearest the inanimate form of the host, and Rabbit, clutching at his *jelab* to drag him to his feet, crying swiftly:

"Glawi sword! No shoot; noise bring wild mans. Fight just same 'nfidel devil!"

The professor understood that the host was ill or dead and struggled to his feet as Rabbit let out a wailing yell which soared across the still gardens.

"Oulad el Glawi-i-i-i-i! El Glawi-i-i-i-i-i!"

The six Moors were on their feet, evidently shouting to summon the slaves. The first man to rush, as O'Gorman wrenched furiously to free his scimitar beneath the *jelab*, went down with his neck nearly severed by a blow from Rabbit. A second blow met the steel of the next Moor, which gave O'Gorman time to get out his weapon. He parried a blow from one of them and backed against the wall of the building as the Nubian slaves came running up.

O'Gorman's great height and strength perhaps made up for his inexperience with a scimitar. Hacking and lunging, he was conscious of Rabbit a few paces from him doing admirable execution the while he yelled—

"Oulad Glawi-i-i!"

From the blue depths of the garden he saw advancing a number of black slaves, their swords glittering in the light of swinging lanterns.

"—— —— these robes!" he panted.

The sting of steel biting his arm spurred him to an extra rapid parry and lunge. He glowed with satisfaction as he felt the sword sink through flesh; but, slow in recovering the curved blade from the carcass, he had to dodge another man and, by falling upon his hands, to trip a great Nubian with his foot.

There seemed now to be half a hundred, a solid mass of black faces and white robes about him at which he could but hack almost indiscriminately. The noise of guttural oaths, yells and groans, which was pierced by Rabbit's persistent cry, smothered the swift rush of naked feet. Then suddenly the attackers began to drop on all sides in front of him. He found himself free to get his second wind. Came Rabbit's voice:

"All right, ole 'Fessor! This fren's o' mine!"

Leaning on his sword, O'Gorman looked about him and, in the dim light of the few lanterns left unbroken in the mêlée, recognized the chief of El Glawi's escort.

V

WHILE O'Gorman was recovering his breath and wondering what was the meaning of the sudden influx of bloody murder and sudden death, Rabbit broke away from the guttural clamor among his friends.

"You no stop here, ole chap," said he. "We get busy fix 'em fine, but you no stop here."

"But why not? What are you going to do?"

"Nothing much do 'cause all Moor mans here dead ones, but we make business," And holding up a lantern, "You got one man; he op'rate on you, huh? All right, ole chap. Now you come 'long, an' nice lady she look after you. Fine!"

"Lady!" expostulated the professor. "What on earth——"

"Quick," urged Rabbit. "'Cause, if you stop, Moor soldier see you an' make plenty more fight. Un'erstand? Come 'long."

"H'm," mumbled O'Gorman, allowing Rabbit to lead him away. "I suppose you know more about this mess than I do."

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Rabbit guided him into the house, through a chamber, out across an interior courtyard and into another room, where upon a great divan he was bidden to sit.

"Now, ole 'Fessor!" adjured Rabbit. "I go 'long make business quick. You stop 'long. Bimeby lady she come after your 'cision."

"'Cision? Lady? What lady?" mumbled O'Gorman restively.

"You shut your head," said Rabbit sharply. "I come back 'long tell you everythin' you want to know," he added as he disappeared with the lantern.

"For the love of heaven," grumbled the professor, watching the light twinkle through the trees of the courtyard, "what is the meaning of this Barnum and Bailey show? But I'm sore, undoubtedly," he reflected, putting down the scimitar to feel his body and arms. "H'm. And somebody ripped me here? Bleeding, too. Make a horrible mess on these white robes. Still, that was a good scrap! H'm. Queer how one so thoroughly enjoys a primitive emotion. —— this darkness, and I want a smoke."

He began to search in his *skarrah* beneath the robes for a cigaret, pipe or tobacco.

"The devil!" O'Gorman muttered. "Now I've no matches! H'm. Hullo, what's that?" "That" was repeated, a distinct feminine giggle. "The lady?"

A slit of yellow light struck through the darkness, became wider and disclosed a vague form in large trousers. The light grew in volume and revealed three other figures.

"What on earth——"

The startled professor sat up alarmedly. Through the open door came four women, each with a large lantern. Solemnly they advanced down the large room, drew up before him, muttered unintelligible words and bowed profoundly.

The professor stood up. The girls put down their lanterns all in a row and advanced toward him. They began to chatter excitedly.

"Good Lord!" exclaimed the professor. "H'm. But what can I do?"

They continued to chatter. O'Gorman noticed that the four were plump, young and rather good-looking. One giggled. And one with a little scream pointed to the bloodied *silham*. Immediately small cries broke out. As the professor stood still, bewildered, one rushed away on bare feet with the speed of an antelope. Two seized each a hand and, before the professor understood their object, began to kiss his fingers.

"Oh, my lord!" he exclaimed and attempted to release his hands.

They ceased for the moment, chattered excitedly and by their gesticulations intimated that they wished him to be seated.

"But, my dear young ladies," protested the flabbergasted giant, "I— Oh, —— it, who are you? What would your husband —I beg your pardon, I mean husbands or— or whatever you have, say? I—I know —that is, this sort of thing—Mohammedan customs— Oh——!"

This little speech met with great applause. Giggling delightedly, the girls began to pull upon his arms, which made him flinch with the pain of the wound. The third girl, jealous possibly at having no handy limb to maul, squeaked indignation and pointed to the blood-stain. Immediately the offender relaxed her hold, evidently pleading forgiveness, while the other snatched the abandoned hand and showered it with kisses.

In greater embarrassment than ever the professor stepped backward to escape the assault. The divan tripped him. He sat down unexpectedly, dragging the girls on top of him. From a confused, squirming mass of professor and femininity rose above squeals of delight a stentorian voice.

"Rabb-it! Rabb-it!" bawled the professor.

In the midst of this hubbub entered the fourth girl with a black slave bearing a kettle of hot water, some leaves of a shrub and bandages. Violently indignant, probably because she felt that she had missed something, she began to upbraid the others for maltreating a wounded and defenseless man.

As the professor's brassy beard rose from the tangle of forms like a dim sun, they released him and stood apart most penitently. Clutching the displaced turban in one hand, he scrambled to his feet.

"Look here, young ladies," he protested, "this can't go on. I mean, that is to say— what does it all mean? Can't any of you speak English? *Français? Español?* No? Oh, lord, what am I to do? Where the devil's Rabbit?"

Unconsciously he placed a hand upon his wounded arm, a motion followed by four white and one black face. He advanced a

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step. Immediately they cut off his retreat, chattering excitedly. He looked down at them and, suddenly struck with the absurdity, grinned. Immediately they all went into paroxysms of laughter.

"Well, I must admit, my dears," he exclaimed more quietly, "this is the most extraordinary fix I've ever gotten myself into. If Rabbit— Oh ——! I beg— still, you don't understand whatever I say, —— it!"

A FAIR girl with a slightly retroussé nose pointed eloquently to the divan. Another timidly clutched at his injured hand. But the fourth, the most slender and apparently the youngest, smiling ingratiatingly, merely touched the other hand and motioned to the slave bearing the hot water and medicaments. The professor twitched his beard perplexedly. He smiled. They giggled.

"Well, I suppose you're the lady recommended by that —— traitor Rabbit, is that right?" The four urgently signaled that whatever the red giant said was most certainly correct. "H'm. Well, if you promise not to manhand—that is, molest me, I— I shall be grateful for medical treatment." He pointed to the kettle, "Get that?"

Immediately the slave deposited the kettle, and the girl began to manipulate the strips of calico.

"That's good."

Reassured, the professor began to pull up the voluminous sleeve of his *jclab* to expose the wound on the forearm and quite innocently sat upon the divan. Immediately he was surrounded; two crouched beside him, and, while the youngest commanded the slave to pour out the hot water into a brass basin, the fourth began expertly and most determinedly to remove the whole garment.

"No! No!" ejaculated the professor hastily. "That isn't necessary! No, I tell you, confound it!"

The girl giggled and persisted. The professor attempted to rise. One of the others gently removed his turban and Fez cap and the other assisted the garment operator.

"Ladies, I beg of you!" exclaimed the professor, rising by force and dragging two girls with him. "I tell you I don't wish——"

At that moment the door of the chamber opened. Rabbit appeared.

"Thank heaven! Here you are!" shouted the professor, erect, but with two girls still draped around his shoulders with their feet on the divan. "For heaven's sake, take these women. For the love of Mike, what's this?"

Behind Rabbit filed a troop of women. The professor stood staring blankly. Rabbit stalked solemnly toward him. The women continued to troop into the room.

"I come tell you, 'Fessor, ole chap," began Rabbit airily. "We fixed up business an'——"

"—— your business!" ejaculated the professor, glaring at twenty-seven pairs of curious bright eyes. "Who the devil are these women?"

"Womans?" queried Rabbit blandly. "Awf'lly jolly womans, huh?

"Who are they?" insisted the professor.

"They? Why they your wifes, ole chap! They——"

"What!" roared the professor.

"You kill him chief; now you chief, an' you take him wifes b'long you. They——"

"My ——!" yelled the professor.

With one shake of his great shoulders, the giant shook the two girls away and plunged out of the room into the courtyard, fleeing desperately from a host of squeaks above which rose a wail of:

"'Fessor! 'Fessor! Say, ole chap——"

VI

IN HIS flight the professor had not gotten far, for in the darkness he had blundered around the inner courtyard like a furious bull in a pen, to be cornered by an indignant Rabbit with the lantern. In spite of Rabbit's most eloquent expostulations no argument nor entreaty could persuade the modest giant to remain within that house that night. Stormily he demanded to be conducted back to the room in which they had prepared for the feast.

According to Rabbit, that house was away at the other end of the gardens near to the main gates, where, he insisted, passed many of the household upon their domestic duties who, made curious by the sounds of the fight, might be moved to investigate and chatter. Whereas the big house was secluded and barred from inquisitive eyes by sanctity of the harem.

At last the professor had consented to permit Rabbit to dress his wound roughly

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and to retire to a small room, on the assurance that no one would disturb him.

After a mattress had been hastily arranged by a negress slave at whom the professor had glared suspiciously, the effect of the panic began to subside; which had the double effect of restoring the professor's sense of humor and allowing the wound to assert its right to smart.

As he lay in the dark, he reflected that possibly he had been somewhat absurd regarding the women. Quite probably they had not intended any harm; indeed, if it had not been for that charming idiot, Rabbit, he would not have made himself ridiculous. He supposed that he had cut rather a comical figure. He smiled. Still, what on earth was one supposed to do on being confronted with a horde of women who considered themselves to be one's wives? He chuckled.

The young slender girl was rather an ingenuous little thing, and certainly she had been most practical in her attempts to give him first aid. And the arm ached damnably, too. Yes, he had been idiotic, he admitted. But then he never could stand a bunch of women around him; for that reason he would never, if he could escape, attend "at homes" and similar congregations of giggling females.

He chuckled again at the idea that the women indeed must have thought that, as Rabbit put it, he was "crazy wild." Of what was there to be scared, anyway? The professor snorted contemptuously at the image of his figure fleeing and at the same time cast suspicious eyes at the glimmer of starlight through the filigree barred window.

Unsuccessfully he tried to find a more comfortable position to rest the aching arm. Any inclination to sleep refused to be summoned. He began to ponder upon the fight; who had poisoned the chief and why? He recalled Rabbit's mysterious outcry, which had evidently been a ruse to distract the attention of the Moors to enable him to change the glasses; but the professor could not recollect whether Rabbit had changed the chief's glass for his own or for the professor's.

Anyway, why should any one have attempted to poison Rabbit or himself? They had apparently brought excellent credentials from the powerful Lord of the Atlas. Perhaps the fellow was an enemy of El Glawi.

As he pondered restlessly, the cry of the *muezzin* trailed lazily on the cool night air. The professor abandoning any attempt to sleep, sat up and swore. His arm was throbbing abominably, and he wanted to smoke. He rose, fumbled for the door and found his way into the courtyard. Lighting his pipe, he began to stroll about. Presently a glimmer of white in an open door attracted his eyes. He investigated, found steps and cautiously mounted them, to find himself upon the rooftop.

"By the lord!" he exclaimed.

To the northwest the mountains towered in wooly sepia against the stars; to the south the plain of the Sûs was a filmy lake; and over the velvety contours of the trees of the gardens the town huddled like a flock of sheep shepherded by rigid minarets. The call to prayer floated like a silken pennant in a fitful breeze.

The professor settled upon a low parapet and smoked contentedly. Just as he had replugged his pipe, he caught a glimpse of green as tenuous as the first film of ice flooding the lower stars of the east.

"By ——, that's mighty beautiful!" he remarked aloud in his enthusiasm.

"Sure, ole chap! But you crazy wild get your head cut open, huh?"

"What the devil?" The professor started and saw Rabbit beside him. "For the love of heaven," he added, irritable at being disturbed, "can't you let me alone?"

"Sure, I let you 'lone," agreed Rabbit. "But, if you no want get your head cut, whaffor you smoke pipe for Moor man to see?"

"Oh, ——!" ejaculated the professor, but he acknowledged the wisdom of the protest by knocking out the ashes and putting away the pipe.

"Moor man no walk on roof," explained Rabbit. "But you stop if you want. They think you woman in light o' star." Then you want to dream won'erful dream you get busy. I stop, too, an' make won'erful po'try just same star he come an' kiss you."

And quietly Rabbit subsided upon his haunches by the parapet.

FROM the flat eastern horizon the arc of the sky leaped through the spectrum from scarlet to where it was shattered by the deep purple of the Atlas valleys, shedding an aura of glory

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upon the misty plain and distant mountain peaks as well, tinting the town of Bughalim in a faint rose. Upon a tower, silhouetted against Chinese green, a stork considered with portentous dignity the awkward plunge of her mate as he dipped to rise into the graceful plane of space of turquoise blue.

Seated upon a low parapet were the figures of O'Gorman and Rabbit engaged in grave conversation, the beard of the professor rivaling in fiery glory the rising sun.

"But, Rabbit," the professor was saying, "this is perfectly preposterous! I can't——"

"No perfec'ly 'post'rous!" interrupted Rabbit with much vigor.

"But, —— it!" exploded the professor. "I tell you I positively won't live with thirty-odd females. It's ——"

"I no want you live with thirty-odd females!" retorted Rabbit. "You shut your head an' listen what I want to say."

"Well, go on then."

"I tell you, 'cause caid he dead one, you must take him wifes, huh? All right, ole chap."

"But I won't, I tell you!"

"Can it!" said Rabbit sharply. "This dead one he no very 'portant caid so he only got thirty-odd female wifes."

"Only! Oh, my ——!"

"Truly big sultan just same Mulai Hassan he have seven hundred an' forty wifes."

"Good Lord! Solomon was only a piker after all!" exclaimed O'Gorman flippantly.

"You —— fool, you no un'erstand! When Moor man he dead one, him brother must take all him wifes; father he dead one, son must keep wifes 'long him."

"But——"

"Not truly wifes. Un'erstand? just stop 'long in harem 'long him truly wifes."

"Oh!" ejaculated the professor with some relief.

"Sure. Fine, huh? This man he only got four wives and few lady sweethearts."

"Oh, is that all!"

"Sure," asserted Rabbit relievedly. "So you get 'long fine, huh?"

"Now see here, Rabbit," said the professor gravely, "I wish you to understand that I won't have anything to do with any of these women."

"Whaffor no?" demanded Rabbit indignantly. "They bew'ful 'strawdin'ry ladies, huh? You crazy wild?"

"No, I am not crazy, Rabbit, but I'll get —— wild if you bother me any further with this ridiculous nonsense."

"Not 'dic'lous nonsense!" protested Rabbit and stared at the professor perplexedly. "'Strawdin'ry! Awf'lly' strawdin'ry!" he muttered sadly. "An' you won'erful bew'ful man just same Glawi he say! Ladies awf'lly sorry, perfec'ly disgus'ing sorry!"

"I don't care whether they're sorry or no. Now what are we going to do?"

"I dunno. I dunno," acknowledged Rabbit dismally. "By Sinfooloosir!"

"But what is the necessity for this preposterous proposal of yours?"

"'Post'rous 'posal?" murmured Rabbit, absent-mindedly. "You my awf'lly friend, an' you crazy wild! Perfec'ly disgus'in', perfec'ly awf'lly disgus'in'! What you want to do with pos'trous 'posal?"

"See here, Rabbit. Why do you want to thrust these confounded females upon me?"

"Why? Whaffor?"

"Yes, yes. For what reason—if there is one?"

"Just same I tell you; you must take him wifes."

"But why, —— it, why?"

"'Cause you must! Caid man he dead one, huh? All right. Now you got be caid. You look just same him red whisker. 'Cause, if soldier man an' Moor man in city know caid dead one, they want make us dead, too. If you no do that, they come 'long kill us. Sure. Him Glawi mans only twenty fightin' mans, you, me. One man he go tell Glawi on fast camel all 'bout what we want do. He get there—five day; Glawi he get all worked up—two day; he want come long fast—five, six day. All right. That make two weeks, huh? You just got make p'etend you caid, 'less you crazy wild want be dead one. You want, huh?"

"No, I'm not exactly crazy wild to be dead, but—but, —— it," exclaimed the exasperated professor, "I positively will not —h'm—will not have anything to do with these females!"

"Mohammed he say," commented Rabbit, "when man he no want flirt with bew'ful lady, he dead one sure. All right, 'Fessor," he added hastily. "I got won'erful 'dea. I tell him wifes that you make swear word with Allah no flirt for two year. That good? All right, huh?"

"Yes, I'll agree to that," assented the

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professor, smiling relievedly. "Only for heaven's sake get me out of this within the two years!"

"Sure."

"But remember that you are to keep them away from me."

"All right, 'Fessor, they only come 'long tickle you few times."

"Tickle me?" gasped the professor. "They'll do nothing of the kind!"

Rabbit's big brown eyes regarded him sadly.

"I dunno," he stated dismally, "how I explain what kind funny man you are to your new wifes."

"They're not my wifes, —— you."

"All right, ole chap, 'Fessor!" added Rabbit soothingly as he rose. "I go 'long make bew'ful ladies all per'fec'ly, awf'lly sorry."

"Wait a minute! Before you begin your fearful tale of unrequited love," said the professor, grinning contentedly, "tell me exactly how we stand. You talk so much that I don't know now why that fellow wanted to poison me."

"You talk too much 'bout ladies," reproved Rabbit. "That caid man he want poison you 'cos of him bally insect at Marakeesh who come more fast on camel an' tell caid all 'bout how you play with him brother an' break him neck."

"Yes, but——"

"That insect he— What you call brother him father? Uncle? Uncle. Caid uncle of bally insect, understand?"

"Yes. But how did you happen to know that coffee was doctored?"

"I no know, but I look out all time. I see bally insect he make mistake: he want to give you wrong cup; then he change."

"Yes, I observed that, too. But why?"

" 'Cause I am hillman. No Moor man live long time in Moor man country if he no look out all time."

"Yes, but you told me that always the host eats or drinks before his guest as a guarantee of good faith."

"Sure he do when he eat an' when he drink, but no with coffee. That why; when friend tell you one man dead 'cause of poison, you know he drank coffee!"

"Quaint idea! But what's going to happen now if I impersonate the chief? I can't speak?"

"You no want talk. You stop 'long gardens. We tell peoples you want play with your womens all time so they no want talk with you. Bally insects slaves he no want to say nothin', 'cause he scared we cut off him head. You just stop 'long an'—an'—do what you want," he added, grinning, "till Glawi he come."

"H'm. Well, in future I think I shall avoid coffee!"

"Don't you get all worked up, ole 'Fessor. I know when plenty trouble want come 'long. I knew this awf'lly fight come soon."

"How?"

"You no rec'lect Glawi he make prayer for you, tell Allah send you plenty blood for sword, huh? Allah he love Glawi just same I tell you; consequently plenty blood come. Fine, huh?"

"Why the devil did you not warn me?"

"Warn me? Whaffor I warn? I no warn 'cause you 'nfidel. When 'nfidel know plenty trouble come 'long, he want get all worked up. That why Allah he no tell 'nfidel; he only tell Mohammed man."

"H'm. Yet you told me that I was just the same as the Moors after that little affair at Mazagan."

"Sure!" assented Rabbit enthusiastically. I 'pologize, 'Fessor, ole chap! I forget one time. That fine, huh? All right. Now I want tell you somethin'. Plenty more blood he come 'long for us, more plenty this time. Sure! Fine! Awf'lly jolly, huh?"

"How?" demanded O'Gorman.

"How? How?" mocked Rabbit. "Whaffor how? Just same all 'nfidel! Allah he tell him one thing; then he want to know ev'rything! But Moor man he just make liddle prayer an' he say: *Inshallah!* (as God wills). So Allah he love him more better! Now you come 'long, 'cos Moor man no stop on roof; he keep roof for him lady womans—an'," added Rabbit, "you no want meet ladies here, huh?"

"—— you!" growled the professor, smiling.

VII

RABBIT had proudly led the professor to a large room facing the pleasant courtyard, which he said had been the favorite of the late chief. Within, the professor discerned an enormous French bedstead and heard a curious united ticking. Investigation revealed fourteen clocks of French, German and

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English manufacture, each and every one in cheerful activity and at different hours, under the control of a special slave.

The great bedstead was rather a divan than a bed, for the Moor merely rolls up in his *jelab* to sleep without any frills such as pillow-slips and sheets. After these clocks had been removed, the professor settled down with the aid of his camp equipment and endeavored to occupy the time in tabulating notes, scribbling impressions and theories for future reflection and comparison and promenading in the gardens or smoking in the courtyard, listening to Rabbit chanting eery songs of the hills as he plucked the strings of a *guinbri*.

So passed ten days—days of inaction to the impatient O'Gorman, irritated by the fact that the distraction of the episode with the confounded women had caused him to forget to take advantage of the dozen or more perfectly good heads belonging to the slain corpses, which had since been handed over for the Moorish obsequies—except, of course, that of the caid, which had, Rabbit informed him, been secretly buried in the gardens to avoid recognition by the townspeople.

The slave girls attended upon him, but, although he did not encounter any of his official "wifes," he saw them like a flock of penguins, hooded to the eyes, perambulating upon the roof every afternoon with a penchant for the extreme edge which gave view to the quarters of their "lord," who ever discreetly retired within the room and became portentously busy with papers.

Before the eleventh day the professor had become aware of one hooded figure squatting alone on the inner parapet, from under the hood of which a pair of brilliant eyes stared persistently toward him.

"Why the devil can't you stop those women staring at me?" grumbled the professor to Rabbit.

"Whaffor?" demanded Rabbit. "Ladies very sad 'cause you no want to play with 'em. Whaffor you no want 'em look at you make liddle po'tries, huh?"

"Poetry be ——!"

"No be ——!" protested Rabbit. "Whaffor? Make po'try most won'erful thing. Moor man say more better sit in desert make po'try 'long won'erful woman than be sultan."

"Sounds like Omar Khayyam!" said the professor, looking at Rabbit.

" 'Yam? Who him?"

"He was an Arabian poet."

"I dunno him. Him no great stunt. Ev'ry Moor man he make po'try 'cause he know love an' po'try more better thing in life. Only bally insects work."

"Well, why do you work then?"

"Me work?" said Rabbit loftily. "I no work. I amuse my own self!"

"Are you amusing yourself when you're working for me?"

"I no work for you, I tell you. I come 'long you 'cause you 'muse my own self."

"Well, I'm ——!" The professor chuckled. "Do the tourists amuse you, too?"

"Sure. He awf'lly, awf'lly funny insects!"

"Yes, but the funny insects give you money. I recollect the argument on the beach," added the professor, amused, "when you were trying to get an extra five shillings out of them."

Rabbit, who was squatting on the doorstep, gazed at the professor inquiringly. Then he sadly wagged his head.

"I think you more better than that, 'Fessor, ole chap. You just same —— fool who look at camel an' he say that animal got too long neck so he want drink too much, two, three time ev'ry day. Yet camel he go if he want more long no drink than ev'ry animal Allah make. Un'erstand?"

"H'm." The professor gazed at Rabbit anew. "Queer," he commented as if to himself, "how environment controls one. In spite of myself, I persist in viewing you in the guise of just a guide. If my imagination would picture you as a romantic troubadour of Arabia—or even here—I should not have made that—h'm—foolish remark. I really believe you are a poet and, by ——, a philosopher as well—which is greater even than a poet—although I should get into heaps of trouble did I say that in the good old United States! I apologize, Rabbit!"

"Sure, I am pote an' brig'nd an' 'osopher just same you say," assented Rabbit, clutching at the words understandable to him. "Just same all Moor mans, 'cept bally insects!"

"There!" exclaimed the professor sharply. "There's that —— female staring again."

Rabbit looked up at the opposite roof,

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where, sitting on the parapet, was the young girl whose bright eyes and teeth glowed dimly in the shadows of the filmy *haik*, transparent against the western light.

"Him Khadijah," announced Rabbit, "daughter o' big chief o' Susi. Abu Bekr he send special, an' she come 'long on camel for four weeks marry him. But she no finish marry him. She awf'lly, awf'lly glad you come 'long kill him husband!"

"But, confound it, I did not kill the man! He poisoned himself instead of me, from what you tell me."

"SURE him poison him own self; but I tell womans you kill him dead one your own self. Him Khadijah no crazy wild for Sidi him husband. She crazy wild for won'erful red 'nfidel."

"Oh lord!" the professor groaned. "Why on earth did you want to make me into a hero?"

" 'Cause all womans crazy wild for hero. Womans no care —— if hero 'nfidel or Mohammed man. That whaffor Mohammed he say truly words that woman no got soul like man. But whaffor you no like Khadijah? Him truly won'erful girl. No won'erful for Moor man," he added judiciously, " 'cause him too much just same palm-tree. Moor man he want woman lots of grease. That why Sidi he no yet finish marry Khadijah. He want wait till him finish eat."

"Finish eat? What on earth do you mean?"

"You no know? Lady who want be wife him eat plenty, plenty, and two time ev'ry day ole woman she push six lump flour an' fat o' sheep in him mouth so him get lots o' grease more quick."

"Perfectly disgusting!" commented the professor. "Much as they stuff a turkey for Christmas. Ugh!"

"Sure," assented Rabbit. "I know him Chris'mas. Big 'nfidel feast for Sid Eisha, huh? Sure. But him Khadijah no lots grease. Just same 'nfidel he like. Whaffor you no like Khadijah?"

"Because I don't!" exclaimed the professor. "Why the devil can't you leave the subject alone, Rabbit?"

" 'Cause him won'erful woman. Him more clever than other womans. Him more wild than other womans. Him make more better po'try than other womans. Him make man more jolly than other womans. Him want be dead one, if you no want like him an'—an', 'Fessor, ole chap," persuasively, "him just one woman."

"How the devil do you know all this, Rabbit?"

"When him walk on roof, him talk to me in garden an' him tell me him want tell you what I tell you."

"Oh, the devil! Look here, Rabbit; you'll have to cut out this Cupid stuff," he added, smiling. And then restlessly, "This is merely wasting time. I can't make any investigations or do any work sitting around here listening to your fool messages. When is the Glawi to arrive?"

"*Inshallah!*" (When Allah wills.)

The professor rose impatiently.

"Rabbit, if he doesn't turn up within two days, I'm going out."

"Fine! You go out; wild man he cut your head quick!"

"Wild man or no I'm not going to waste any more time," declared the professor, turning away.

" 'Fessor, I say, 'Fessor, ole chap," called Rabbit pleadingly. "You no want look Khadijah? She want sit an' wait for you just same liddle palm-tree in desert want awf'lly, awf'lly for rain come 'long an' kiss him?"

"Go to the devil!" grumbled the professor from within the room.

"All right, ole chap. We see what come out o' him," said Rabbit resignedly and departed with much dignity.

The professor lighted his pipe and, skulking behind the shadow of the door, tried to console himself for the loss of time. Moorish life was conducive to reflection, a state of mind which part of the man loved, but which, so to say, John O'Gorman detested.

O'Gorman desired action, to be doing something, and tormented the professorial personality by perpetually suggesting the exquisite pleasure to be derived from studying the specimens of man known as Berbers and the ineffable joys of measuring innumerable heads. However, there was some consolation in the knowledge that that splendid specimen of a dolichocephalic head should shortly arrive upon the shoulders of the Lord of the Atlas and in speculations as to a method to get him.

Through the rose-tinted courtyard at sunset came the slaves bearing the professor's dinner, in the manipulation of

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which he had grown more adept—and indeed had developed a taste for mutton *cous-cous* and the sweet Moorish tea. In the violet twilight afterward he began his evening promenade around the gardens in the vicinity of the palace in company with his pipe. Now he had become almost as accustomed to the robes and slippers as a Moor so that he could enjoy a stroll without having to chase one slipper each time that he forgot to slither the foot along the ground.

His favorite walk was in a grove of delicately scented orange-trees from where he could glimpse occasionally a plantation of date-palms like a regiment of feather brooms dusting the stars. Usually Rabbit would accompany him. The two would sit for hours beneath a patriarch of a fig-tree while Rabbit propounded snatches of his quaint philosophy that neither Mohammed nor any other had invented.

But on this evening Rabbit had not appeared; sulky, thought the professor and was conscious of a queer sense of disappointment.

Gradually he became aware of a distant murmur as of a waterfall. Wondering, he stopped to listen. The sound died and rose as the lazy rollers of the Atlantic break on a distant beach. Perplexedly he resumed his stroll, unable to decide what could be the cause. Against the paling of the eastern sky the mountain tops were silver-rimmed. Upon the languorous air, kissed with the scents of lilac and orange, came the throbbing cry:

"Allah il Alla-a-ah! La ilaha-a il Alla-a-a-h!"

The professor stood to listen, more and more fascinated by that eery chant evolved by a religion steaming with blood and lust. But was it?

"Alla-a-h Akba-a-a-h! Wa raso-o-o-l Alla-a-a-a-a-h!"

Was it not perhaps the voice of that inconsistency in man—man who reveled in blood and murder, actual or by proxy in fiction, and who yet could breathe poesy or the tenderest sentiment? Softly the moon like the tip of a polished scimitar pierced the woolly mountain ridge. Silver butterflies fluttered among the trees.

As a distant *muezzin* sent his cry quavering into the filmy desert, a gasp disturbed the professor's meditations. He turned. He saw two great eyes like white petals in starlight beneath a cowl spattered with light. A tiny foot moved and became of ivory ringed with flame.

"Az-i-z!" she whispered. *"Ya Azi-z* (beloved)!"

"Oh, ——!" muttered the professor.

AS HE stepped back a pace, she advanced. One arm as delicate as a stork's neck sought the air in plaintive supplication. Words rippled swiftly.

"Go away!" said the professor sternly.

For answer she stepped forward and, loosing the thin *haik*, bathed her molded shoulders in a deep pool of moonlight and tossed her head until her mane of hair splashed silver waters.

"Oh, my ——!" ejaculated the professor.

Yet he stared. She laughed a crowing gurgle like eager wine poured from a bottle, poised as a bird does for flight and like a joyous bather plunged into a dance. Partly conscious of a distant roar as of the freshening sea above which floated the cry of the *muezzin* as delicately indifferent as an albatross, the professor stood fascinated by the graceful curves and swoops like thrills of exquisite music.

Then as suddenly as at the baton of an invisible conductor the rhythm changed, grew faster and faster, drew ever nearer. Impulse was aroused, was electrified by suggestion. Planes of moonlight on her swirled and danced like the flakes of a snowstorm. Her hair spat chips of light.

O'Gorman watched as a bird gazes at the glitter in the snake's eyes. Sense of reality faded. The moonlight seemed woven in a wondrous cocoon, splendid with rhythmic promise. Perfume smote his nostrils. Glittering eyes were upon his. Warm breath bathed him.

" 'Fessor, I say, ole chap! 'Fesso-o-r!"

"God!"

O'Gorman wrenched free. From the shadow of a fig-tree emerged Rabbit, running. He stopped.

"I say, ole chap, awf'lly bally sorry, whaat? I no know you get busy, but——"

"Take this infernal woman away!"

"Whaffor!" exclaimed Rabbit. "Khadijah him——"

Khadijah flung herself upon the giant. O'Gorman swore, bodily threw her from him and exclaimed angrily—

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"For —— sake, take her away, Rabbit, or I'll break your confounded neck!"

Khadijah stood in the moonlight like a grotesque Chinese ivory. Her great eyes glittered, and her hands were clenched. She purred words. Rabbit answered swiftly. O'Gorman turned away. A thin scream whipped the air as she sprang like a mountain leopardess. Frantic hands tore and dragged at his robes. A shrill voice scolded viciously. O'Gorman shook her off. Rabbit called out sharply. Poising indecisively for a moment, Khadijah suddenly moaned and fled into the shadows.

"For —— sake, the woman's mad!" exclaimed the professor.

"Sure, she crazy wild for you," assented Rabbit. "But whaffor you make love with him an' then you want to beat him?"

"Make love! Beat her!" gasped the professor. "What on earth! You're crazy, Rabbit."

"I no crazy! What you call when you hold woman an' kiss him? What you call when you throw woman down just same bundle, huh?"

"I didn't! What in —— are you laughing at?"

"Sure, I laugh!" asserted Rabbit. "You no know when you drink too much wine you drunk, huh? Whaffor you no drunk when you drink woman, whaat?"

"But I didn't! I wasn't drunk with—with—that confounded woman. I——"

"All right, 'Fessor, ole chap! I know him. One time often I get drunk awf'lly drunk. I no know what I do, too. That why no good not drink for long time, 'cause, if you drink just liddle, you get drunk just same if you drink too much. Sure."

The professor removed his glance from Rabbit's grotesque face in moonlight to the shadows.

"—— it," he grumbled, "I believe you're— I—I was kind of intoxicated. You know, Rabbit," he continued quietly, "intoxication is only the inhibition of the conscious and when the subconscious gets control. Well, we're all very much inclined, undoubtedly, to—h'm—to make a fool of ourselves.

"Sure! Know him 'shince. He won'erful——"

" 'Shince? what on earth——"

"Sure. 'Shince, you know, just same you say. Funny liddle thin' inside," explained Rabbit, tapping his head. "He tell us what right, what wrong. You no got 'shince, you no good —— fool; you got good 'shince, you 'strawdin'ry brig'nd. Yessir. I know him. But I no come 'trupt you with lady friend o' you, 'cept you must come 'long make big business."

"Big business? What business?" hopefully. "Has the Glawi come?"

"Glawi no come yet, but friends bally insect from Mazagan he make plenty trouble. He tell Moor mans that you go kill Sid Abu Bekr he dead one; so now Moor man want cut your head."

"What?"

"Whaat? Sure. Listen! You no hear. 'em make talk?" On the still air rose a faint roar as of surf upon a distant beach. "Milyuns bally insects make talk. We get busy, I tell you!"

VIII

SCARCELY had Rabbit urged the professor to hasten when there came a volley of shots close at hand and an outburst of yells among the trees. They stopped involuntarily to listen.

"You talk too much!" exclaimed Rabbit. "Wild mans he break up gate, an' now cons'quently he inside garden look for us cut our head! Come on—make gallop for house."

"But—" began the professor irresolutely.

"You got Glawi sword? Got pistol? No? All right. You shut your head an' come 'long. Gallop!"

Another outburst of yells and the glimpse of flying robes decided the professor to make for the house. Picking up his skirts knee-high, he ran beside Rabbit. Before he was out of the grove, he had lost both slippers. But haste was imperative. A loud bang of a muzzle-loader and the whirr of a bullet hastened their feet.

Unfortunately the orange grove came out upon a blank wall; they would have to get around two sides of the house to make the gate. Another shot found the wall, scattering plaster over them. An erratic fusilade some distance off recorded the efforts of the nineteen Glawi's men. Just as they reached the second corner, a bunch of hillmen raced in time to bar the gate.

"Make jump for gate like ——!" yelled

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Rabbit as his scimitar gleamed blue in the moonlight.

As the professor, defenseless, shrank against the wall to give Rabbit sword-room, he saw the first man's eyes flash white as he reeled backward. Rabbit's weapon was painting vipers of blue as he engaged the two others. One of them knelt down suddenly and sprawled forward as another crowd of a dozen or more reached the scene.

"Make jump!" screamed Rabbit, giving ground for a moment. "An' shut gate!"

The next moment four were upon him. O'Gorman saw a whirl of sparks. Suddenly two men pitched forward, and immediately on top of them collapsed Rabbit. With a terrific yell of anger O'Gorman sprang, seized one, recovering from a lunge—by the *jelab*, caught another beside him by the neck and, lifting both men off their feet, crashed them together. The impact of their skulls cracked even above the pants and curses.

O'Gorman dropped one and, seeing two men rushing with naked blades, grasped the arms and whirled the senseless form around in a circle as a man plays with a child. Five were mowed down. Then, by letting go at the end of the swing, he accounted for a sixth. Another fellow trying to get in behind, he clutched by the *jelab*, drew him in on the swing and with a mighty heave hurled him over his shoulder.

The effort nearly upset his balance. As he stumbled to recover, he beheld Rabbit facing forward with his scimitar in the left hand upon the group of Moors, who appeared momentarily paralyzed.

"Inside!" shouted Rabbit.

Ferocious yells and a couple of wild shots heralded the arrival of the other party from around the house. O'Gorman leaped for the gate, followed by Rabbit. They managed to slam the great gate as the reinforcements, who had cut their way through the Glawi's escort fighting at the gate of the garden, awakened the first gang into activity.

"Oh, boy!" panted Rabbit, leaning against the wall in the moonlight. "You my won'erful awf'lly friend, by Sinfooloosir!"

"Hark at those —— fiends! But you're wounded, Rabbit!" exclaimed O'Gorman. "Let me see!"

"Not awf'lly too much," asserted Rabbit. "Bally insect he make 'cision my arm, an' Allah he put one finger on soul o' mine just small minute."

"Allah did!" exclaimed O'Gorman, examining the head wound. "This fellow nearly scalped you, by ——!"

"Sure," assented Rabbit as O'Gorman tore off the blood-soaked portion of Rabbit's white turban to bind the wound with the remainder. "Sure, Allah he touch me, I tell you, that whaffor I want lie down."

"Oh, I see. You were unconscious, eh? Now for your arm. Hope to God that gate holds," he ejaculated, stopping to listen to the pandemonium without.

"He not too much," persisted Rabbit. "More better go find your Glawi sword an' your 'tomatic. P'raps bally insects want fight more."

Rabbit hurried away into O'Gorman's room and emerged with the scimitar and automatic.

"Now I go look for gun. We sit on roof an' make 'em stroll away from gate."

"But, Rabbit! Where are all the women and the slaves? There doesn't seem to be a soul in the place."

"They all worked up," said Rabbit. "P'raps they run 'way under earth."

"Under earth? What on earth——"

"Sure. I dunno here. But in plenty house Moor man chief he make hole under earth 'cause some time he want to 'scape. P'raps hole here go to liddle church in gardens. I go look for gun; you wait."

O'Gorman stood in the middle of the courtyard, scimitar in hand, watching the gate. The clamor rose and subsided in gusts. Came an explosion and shout. They were trying to blow in the cumbrous lock; but fortunately the gate was held with enormous wooden bars as thick as saplings. Rabbit suddenly appeared from the gloom of a door with his old Colt.

"Come 'long 'Fessor, ole chap! We go 'long shoot 'em."

"Yes," commented O'Gorman; "but even so, we can't keep them away for days. They'll break in that door sooner or later."

"We want to make 'em stroll 'way from gate."

"But supposing we can not?"

"*Inshallah!*" (As Allah wills.)

"H'm. But if the gate does go?"

"*Inshallah!* We stroll down from roof, make won'erful jolly fight. Oh, boy!

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When we finish, all right. Allah he put finger on your soul. Fine! *Hamdullah!*" (Praise be to Allah).

O'Gorman chuckled.

"By God, that's a fighter's philosophy, Rabbit."

"Sure! I am 'osopher just same I tell you!"

As they stepped on to the tiled walk near the steps leading to the roof another explosion rang out, followed by a fiercer outburst of yelling. O'Gorman turned around to look.

"Bally insects want ask Allah give 'em 'strawdin'ry large red 'nfidel make play with," announced Rabbit cheerfully. "But Allah he no want give, I think."

"Well, somehow I hope he won't!" replied O'Gorman grimly. "Hullo! What's that?" He stared across the moonlit courtyard at a ghostly figure in shadow.

"Him?" Rabbit stepped forward a pace. "Oh, him your first wife, Khadijah. Him want look see you all right; she very sorry for you."

"Sorry be ——!" grumbled the professor.

JUST as they reached the roof, they heard a shrill burst of female laughter, followed immediately by a chorus of yells and shouts. Rabbit stopped and listened. He exclaimed gutturally and darted down the stairs, shouting:

"You —— fool! Whaffor you no want kiss your wife? Khadijah open gate for wild mans!"

O'Gorman's remark regarding women was deplorably unjust as he sprang down the narrow stone stairs after Rabbit. Just as they reached the open courtyard, another shrill laugh rang out as a sprite-like figure darted across a patch of moonlight into a well of shadows. Behind her streamed a crowd of wild faces and gleaming swords. Triumphant yells filled the courtyard.

"Back! Back to the stairs!" shouted O'Gorman. "We can't hold 'em in the open!"

Rabbit's Colt spoke. A man yelled, rushed and dived to the ground under O'Gorman's automatic.

"Up the stairs, Rabbit! We can hold a million there!"

As they ran up the stairs a double explosion brought down a shower of plaster on their heels. On the roof top they took positions on each side of the exit.

"Let 'em have it!" said O'Gorman at the sound of shuffles below.

They fired together. A loud scream and guttural oaths answered them. An explosion in the confined space of the stairway sounded like a mine burst. A slug shrieked past their heads toward the moon.

"Tuck your head in, Rabbit," whispered O'Gorman, "or Allah will be busy with you again."

"Allah love me 'cause I talk with Mohammed," retorted Rabbit sharply. A continuous hubbub below resolved into shouts. "Bally insects he want ask us stroll down make 'strawdin'ry jolly fight!"

"Don't be an idiot! There's fifty or more of them."

"Insect he say my mother him bad dancin' girl," muttered Rabbit. "I want go talk bally insects."

"Don't be a fool!" exclaimed O'Gorman.

As Rabbit half rose from his knees, he saw eyes glinting blue in the moonlight, long fangs of teeth in a face green with the appearance of a mangy wolf, blood hungry. The cries increased. Rabbit poured out a flood of invective like a burst dam. There was sudden silence as if to listen respectfully. The response came in a chatter of epithets like enraged apes. Rabbit turned his head again and grinned. He looked like a *juju* idol carved in jade.

"We just stroll 'long an'—an' Allah soon he touch our soul, huh?" he inquired with peculiar slowness of speech. "Fine! Oh, boy! You come 'long me, red 'nfidel?"

The deliberate broken speech of the man thrilled O'Gorman's spine.

"Yes, Rabbit," he heard himself replying in queer hushed accents. "Let us go!"

Came another outburst of challenges. As O'Gorman rose with Rabbit a new sound caught his ears. Rabbit struck out an arm to bar his progress.

"*Glaw-i-i-i-i-i-i! Ad Glawi-i-i-i-i-i-i!*"

"Allah he love us!" whispered Rabbit and sank back on to his haunches contentedly. "Soon Allah he want talk bad swear-word for bally insects."

"But keep 'em amused," whispered O'Gorman and emptied his automatic down the stairs, eliciting another gale of insulting jeers. But the tribesmen did not attempt to rush the narrow stairs. Rabbit fired while O'Gorman reloaded, endeavoring to drown the war-cry of the Glawi's men.

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Again came their yell, this time close to the house, and the furious galloping of horses. A concerted shout from below told that the raiders had heard. Signaling to Rabbit, O'Gorman crept down the stairs. The shouts and screams and shots broke into a hurricane as they reached the courtyard. In the gateway was a mass of wildly struggling men. O'Gorman struck up Rabbit's revolver.

"No! No!" he ejaculated. "You'll as likely shoot the Glawi's men!"

"Whaffor no?" demanded Rabbit indignantly. "Only bally insects!"

Too late to fight their way out, the crowd broke, leaving their dead and wounded.

"Look out for the roof!" shouted O'Gorman and they both sprang to cut off the escape over the roof.

Two men rushing were dropped; others, pursued by the yelling Glawi men, dashed madly into the rooms. Rabbit got in two more shots at flying robes, but had to stop as the rescuers swarmed over the courtyard.

"Why the devil don't they surrender?" exclaimed O'Gorman as one fellow, after putting up a stubborn fight with three men, pitched forward on to his face in the moonlight.

"Whaffor s'render?" inquired Rabbit, watching the scene contentedly. "More better lie down in fight than have your hand or your head cut, huh?"

Then, catching sight of a flying robe diving into darkness for safety unnoticed, he sprang after him. O'Gorman sat on the bottom steps, listening to the yells and squeals of the massacre arising from all sides, and felt physically sick as he watched his late escort's chief, with the remnants of his men, skewering and butchering gleefully.

Rabbit reappeared—looking, with his blood-stained sword and bandaged head, like a true Barbary pirate—and, grinning like a satyr, spurned with his foot the body of a young hillman lying upon his back, exposing to the indifferent moon the clear-cut Greek features of the relative of the Azzimour brigand who had inspired and led the vendetta.

"Horrible!" murmured the professor, shaking his head. "And none of them knows why he does it—even I, my ——, kissed that —— woman who caused all this!"

IX

EL GLAWI, in spotless white save for the line of red beneath the turban and a touch of green slashed with orange at the throat-opening, sat in the cool shade of the western side of the late caid's official residence. On either side of him squatted some of his followers and his personal guards, great blacks, garbed—after the manner of the sultan's *Makhazni*—in high fez caps.

At the far end of the dusty square near the main gates of the gardens were a hundred or more of the notables of the town, silent and inscrutable, prepared for whatever should be meted out to them by the Glawi in his wrath for having dared to attack even an infidel who was under his protection: slow torture or, perhaps, if Allah were good, merely the loss of a hand and the confiscation of their goods.

Opposite the Glawi squatted the professor and Rabbit. After the long preamble of formal compliments, which Rabbit did not trouble to translate, he turned to the professor.

"Glawi he want say that he awf'lly happy bally insects make trouble for you, 'cause he know you awf'lly happy to have lovely 'strawdin'ry fight."

"Certainly!" agreed the professor, grinning sardonically. "I wouldn't have missed it for anything! Tell him I'm accustomed to that sort of thing every morning before breakfast to keep my digestion in order. No, no!" he added hastily as Rabbit turned to the Glawi. "Don't do anything of the kind. Perhaps he hasn't a sense of humor."

"All right, ole chap, I no tell!" as the Glawi continued to speak. "Now he say he very sorry that caid man he try poison you, 'cause that not pretty thing to do with guest. So he very cross an' want punish this insects; cut off hand an' put in warm wax, y' know, ole chap," he added enthusiastically.

"Good heavens! Tell the Glawi not to do anything of the kind," urged the professor. "That—that it was quite natural for the fellow—that is, for him—to wish to revenge his cousin or nephew or whatever he was—the brigand, I mean—and that—and, Rabbit, tell him I forgive them freely an'——"

"All right, ole 'Fessor; don't you get all worked up."

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"Well, persuade him to abandon that ferocious idea."

"No ferocious 'dea. 'Sides, no possible 'suade Glawi no do what he want. He 'strawdin'ry big chief. 'Sides, he no want do that for you, 'Fessor. He just do 'cause he want; 'cause caid he no do what he tell him. If Glawi he send liddle goat for caid an' caid want kill liddle goat, he want punish all caid peoples. That Moor man way."

"But, Rabbit," persisted the professor, "that's——"

"You shut you head!" adjured Rabbit. "Glawi he want talk some more."

"Confound you!"

"Don't you make your eye whisker run 'bout, or Glawi he want know whaffor," retorted Rabbit.

The Glawi continued to talk at some length, to which Rabbit responded without consulting the professor.

"What's he say!" demanded the professor.

"He want to know all 'bout caid an' how he want poison you an' how we have lovely fight. He think him very funny."

"Oh, does he?" growled the professor.

To the professor the Glawi appeared in the morning light a more statuesque Mongolian than ever; the thinness of the mustaches emphasized the likeness and was in complete harmony with the slant of the eyes. Covetously he regarded that head and became so abstracted in wondering how he could procure the desired measurements that he scarcely heard Rabbit saying—

"Glawi he want tell you you won'erful bew'ful man!"

"Yes, yes," said the professor abstractedly, trying to remark the angle of the Glawi's temple. "I know all that."

"He want know if all 'Merican 'nfidels strong as you?"

"Yes, yes, certainly, undoubtedly."

"Now he want know if that 'Merican way make fight?"

"Yes, yes, undoubt— What's that, Rabbit?"

"He want to know if that way 'Merican way make fight—throw bally insects over your head?"

"Throw insects? What on earth— Oh." The professor blinked at Rabbit. "But I didn't throw people over my head. Where on earth did he get that idea?"

"He say. I no see, 'cause I busy lie down. But all wild mans he say you pick up two insects an' smash him head just same you smash egg, huh? An' two insects he dead ones."

"H'm. Well, yes; I recollect something of the sort," admitted the professor. "But they made me mad, you see, and——"

"You take one insect an' hit just same big stick, an' then you throw four insects over your shoulder just same you throw ole coat, huh?"

"Nonsense, I didn't do anything of the sort. Tell the Glawi that they exaggerate."

"Sure!" assented Rabbit and informed the Glawi that the tribesmen were jealous liars, that the red infidel had thrown six men over his shoulders and broken their necks and that he was the greatest warrior in America.

"Now he want to know," said Rabbit solemnly, "if you speak truly word."

"Yes, certainly," assured the professor, nodding acquiescence.

"He say you strawdin'ry large man. He large man, too, but you more better large. Only he see one man more large than you. He have him black man. He want to know if ev'ry 'Merican mans large?"

"From the Middle West and West they are generally big men, tell him. But we have small men, too."

"*Ya Sidi*," reported Rabbit, "the red infidel says that all men of his tribe are big because it is the custom to strangle male children at birth who have not big bones."

"It is an estimable custom and of great wisdom," concurred the Glawi.

"He say," said Rabbit, "that he think 'Mericans plenty wise mans."

The professor smiled graciously and bowed.

THE smoldering eyes watched him inscrutably. The Glawi mumbled a request that the red infidel would give an exhibition with any of his men around him.

"'Fessor, ole chap," interpreted Rabbit, "he want to know if you like him give you sev'ral 'strawdin'ry nice wifes?"

"Good ——, no!" exclaimed the professor, shaking his head. "Tell him that—that it isn't the—it's very kind of him and that I appreciate his kindness, but that it isn't the custom of the Americans."

"*Ya Sidi*," translated Rabbit, "the red infidel is ungracious in the manner of the ignorant. In the land of the infidel is there no light from the blessings of Allah, the All

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Beneficent, Confiding. But this red infidel is my friend; even as he finds favor in thy sight, I crave that your lordship should forgive him."

The Glawi bowed almost imperceptibly and mumbled.

"He say he awf'lly bally sorry, ole chap, disgus'in' sorry you no like nice lady. But he say he know Allah not finish make infidel man prop'lly; so he want give you nice present, an' he say what you like most?"

The professor's eyes lighted; his gaze returned to the Glawi's head as a lover to his love. He hesitated.

"Tell the Glawi that I am very much indebted to him indeed and that I—h'm—" the glance switched to the Glawi's head again—"I shall consider him my greatest benefactor and, more than that, the benefactor of science if he will permit me to—to take the measurements of his most remarkable head. Tell him it's a most remarkable head."

"You crazy wild, huh?" demanded Rabbit. "Whaffor you want get him all worked up an'—cut our heads, huh?"

"Don't be ridiculous, Rabbit," said the professor sharply. "Do what I tell you. Do you understand?"

"Now you want get all worked up!" murmured Rabbit disgustedly. "Whaffor I dunno. You make magic on my head if you want. I ed'cated man, an' I un'erstand 'nfidel crazy way, but——"

"Do as I tell you, Rabbit!" demanded the professor.

"All right, 'Fessor, ole chap, I do!" assented Rabbit soothingly and, turning to the Glawi, stated:

"*Ya Sidi*, the red infidel kisses the hem of your robe in gratitude. The unbelief of the infidel teaches him that Allah in his wisdom hath placed understanding in the skull of man according to the weight and size thereof, even as if he were a merchant selling nuts in a booth of the market-place. Stricken thus by Allah in his infinite mercy, the red infidel prayeth that the great Lord of the Atlas, than whom is there none mightier, shall permit him to make measurements of the skulls of the lord's slaves even as the cobbler measureth feet. The son of Busselham el Hero craveth pardon for speaking such foolishness."

Glawi regarded the red-bearded giant inscrutably.

"Son of Busselham," he replied slowly, "a mighty and learned saint even before myself hath written of the weakness of the souls of the Faithful; even so am I, for this red son of the infidel is truly a mighty man of thews. So it seemeth to me—may Allah forgive me in his infinite compassion——"

"May Allah forgive thee in his infinite compassion!" repeated Rabat ibn Busselham.

"That it be a grievous thing that He hath chosen so to afflict him. Yet is not Allah All Understanding, Wise?"

"All Understanding, Wise!"

"So shall not I, too, be merciful, compassionate to those that are doomed, perishing? Let it be even as he in his unbelieving foolishness desireth. Let him choose of those dogs yonder! Praise to Allah the All Merciful, Forgiving!"

"Praise to Allah the All Merciful, Forgiving!" echoed Rabbit.

"All right, 'Fessor, ole chap; he say you crazy. But, if you want, you can find out what head you want from those bally insects who sit by wall there. Fine, huh?"

"But I asked for his head!" exclaimed the professor disappointedly.

"He say no want give you him head—not now," added Rabbit hastily. "P'raps he give you later if Allah he want!"

"Oh, ——!" muttered the professor. "H'm. Well, tell him that I thank him very much indeed." He glanced across at the mob. "But I'll get his head yet!"

"Sure!" assented Rabbit and conveyed the professor's gratitude to the Glawi in excessive terms.

"Glawi he say we go tell which head you want 'mong insects. You make pretty bow, an' we go 'long."

The professor accordingly bowed prettily. As they rose, the Glawi summoned a giant negro and apparently gave him instructions, for the man stalked across to where the crowd of Moors were squatting and yelled at them ferociously. Amid muttering and protest they stood up. The guard spoke to Rabbit, who turned to the professor.

"How many you want, 'Fessor, ole chap?"

"How many! Well—h'm—I had better pick out the most interesting types, I suppose. Can you arrange that they stand in a row?"

"Sure!"

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RABBIT spoke to the guard at length. The man appeared to have difficulty in comprehending. Rabbit raged at him. Finally the fellow turned and roared at the prisoners. Much murmuring and protest arose. The man shouted menacingly. Those who wore fez caps and turbans slowly removed them, grumbling diligently.

"What's the trouble, Rabbit?"

"Insects he no want take off *rozzah*."

"Why not? That's nothing very terrible."

"You no un'erstand," retorted Rabbit. "No Moor man may show naked head; just same 'nfidel he no want take off him clothes in street."

"Good heavens! Look here, Rabbit—I—Oh, —— it, but I have to have these heads!"

"All right, ole 'Fessor!" said Rabbit soothingly. "You just stroll 'long an' tell which one you want."

"But I can't do it now, Rabbit; I must have my instruments."

"No, you no want 'struments, I tell you. You just tell one you want, 'n' bimeby they made ready for you."

"Made ready?" queried the professor perplexedly.

"Come on quick!" adjured Rabbit. "Glawi he want talk with 'em."

"Well, I suppose so," agreed the professor rather bewildered.

With Rabbit on one side and the black guard on the other he walked around, appraising the conformation of the various shaven heads. Some faces expressed venomous hatred; but mostly they were resignedly inscrutable as the red infidel pointed a finger at the chosen.

Indeed, he was pleased to note that they were far more interesting than he had supposed; the majority had skulls of quite a different type to the northern Moor, but none was such a perfect specimen as that of the Glawi. By the time he had finished, the professor had lost count of the number chosen.

"That fine, huh?" demanded Rabbit. "Now you come 'long, an' when Glawi he finish liddle talk with 'em they make ready for you do what you want."

Still perplexed to know why he should not be allowed to send for his instruments and have done, the professor returned to the small house near the gate, their original quarters. After the lunch Rabbit retired to his room across the courtyard, from whence soon came the soft twang of the *guinbri* and his voice, subdued, crooning the perpetual plaint of a hill song in the sad minor key.

The professor began scribbling notes from observations gathered from the general crowd of the Moors inspected. Just as he was smoking contentedly and wondering when the Glawi would have finished his "liddle talk," a pant startled him. He turned. In the doorway stood Khadijah.

As the professor swore, she broke into a torrent of language. Before he understood her motive, she had flung herself on the ground and began to kiss his feet.

"Rabbit!" bawled the professor. "Rabbit! Oh, for heaven's sake, woman, go away!" he shouted and tore his feet from her clasp.

As he strode away to escape her embarrassing attentions, she cried out and crawled after him.

"Rabbit!" He continued to bawl and by leaping past her gained the door. *Guinbri* in hand, Rabbit was walking leisurely across the courtyard.

"Whaffor you want make such noise?" he demanded.

"What for!" ejaculated the professor indignantly. "That —— woman's here! Take her away!"

Khadijah appeared in the door. Her eyes flashed angrily as she erupted words. At a movement from her the giant stepped back hastily into the courtyard, ready to flee.

"She say," interpreted Rabbit, absentmindedly plucking at the strings of his *guinbri*, "she come ask you pardon 'cause she been bad girl open gate, but she say she do that 'cause she crazy wild for you, an' she all worked up. She ——"

"Yes, yes; that's all right," asserted the professor eagerly. "I forgive her. But tell her for heaven's sake to go away."

"She want know whaffor you kiss her if you no want her?" continued Rabbit to the soft accompaniment of the *plunkety-plunk, plunkety-plunk*.

"Oh, my ——!" groaned the professor. "Tell her, —— it, she made me somehow! I don't know myself. Tell her I'm sorry. I apologize. I— Oh, anything! Only get her to go!"

Rabbit spoke rapidly to the panting

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Khadijah, whose great eager eyes were fixed upon the red giant.

"She say," he continued *plunkety-plink, plunkety-plunk*, "she no want you be sorry. She want you."

"Oh, dear God!" moaned the professor, holding up one hand as if he were arresting the traffic. "No, I tell you, Rabbit——"

A movement of Khadijah's feet sent him three strides across the court. The girl stopped, and her eyes gazed almost insanely as her slender hands dashed madly about like a cloud of white butterflies. A choking flood of words rushed from her. Ten paces from her stood the red giant, nervously eyeing her; beside her stood Rabbit, placidly plunking a sad accompaniment on the *guinbri*. Suddenly he cocked both eyes at the professor like some grotesque bird.

"You no want marry Khadijah, huh?"

"I? Want to marry her?" gasped the professor.

"You perfec'ly disgus'in' sure, ole 'Fessor?"

"Good God, of course not!" ejaculated the giant and started back as Khadijah menacingly advanced a pace, strewing indignant gutturals.

"All right, ole chap!" exclaimed Rabbit. "'Cause you my awf'lly friend, I make him shut him head, huh?"

"If you only would!" prayed the professor.

"Sure. I know him Moor lady!"

On the word Rabbit unexpectedly swung on his heel, holding the *guinbri* in his left hand, and, catching the tempestuous Khadijah in the right arm and lifting her bodily, proceeded to march down the courtyard.

"But, Rabbit!" exclaimed the professor astonished.

As the furiously kicking limbs and clawing hands neared the exit of the courtyard, Rabbit waved the *guinbri* as if in a parting salutation.

"Most extraordinary character!" sighed the professor, gratefully turning to the room. "But, good heavens, what a perfect vixen of a girl! Positively a man is not safe in this country!" Then he chuckled.

Ten minutes later as he was smoking contentedly with his papers, a black guard appeared at the door.

"What do you want?" demanded the professor. "Where's Rabbit—Rabbit, eh?"

Another flow of gutturals and an ebony finger pointing to the head.

"Ah, I get you!" he exclaimed delightedly. "Just a moment."

Gathering up his instruments and his note-book, the professor proceeded to follow the guard, who led him out into the gardens to the main house and through a narrow arch into a small courtyard entirely paved in the blue and white tiles. The guard pointed. In the brilliant sunshine beside a square pond of red water were twenty-five bloody heads, bearded and shaven-skulled, in a row!

X

ONCE more a blunter horn of the moon pierced the woolly sepia of the mountains and began her pursuit of the stars. In the grove where the professor walked, nursing his pipe, was the scent of lilac and orange; on the languorous air came the continuous thrum of many *guinbris* and a high voice wailing a chant of the hills.

By the manner in which he chewed at the pipe-stem, the anger aroused by the ferocious savagery of the Glawi was not yet soothed. Fortunately, perhaps, there had been no one present save the black guard on whom to vent O'Gorman's fury. He had stridden back to the room in what was literally a towering rage. Rabbit was not there, nor could he summon him, having no Arabic. Experience of the ways of man in many parts of the globe served to allay some of his indignation.

Although O'Gorman would not admit it, science is a cold-blooded mistress; to the professor heads are heads whether on shoulders or on a blue-and-white tiled floor. Slaves had brought his dinner in the usual manner. Yet Rabbit did not appear. Wrathfully O'Gorman smoked—but the professor recorded the measurements.

"Confound it," he muttered, "I'll get that—— Glawi yet!" And he stalked in high dudgeon out into the gardens.

But reflection quieted O'Gorman and developed the professor. After all, his object in life was scientific; he could not, nor would he, be so foolish as to try to reform the denizens—no matter how wild or savage—of Morocco any more than the pigmies of the Congo. He smiled and frowned. The image of the Glawi's head tormented him. The barbaric cruelty in the eyes! The professor found himself ardently

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desiring to clip his instruments around the Glawi's decapitated head.

"Good evenin', ole chap!"

Beside him stood Rabbit, draped in the silver light of the moon.

"Where the devil have you been?"

"I make Khadijah shut him head, an' I go make talk with Glawi. He won'erful man!"

"Wonderful butcher!" growled O'Gorman, towering over Rabbit. "Say, did you know he was going to play that hideous joke on me?"

"'Deous joke? 'Deous joke?"

"Yes, yes. When we picked out the heads I wanted, did you know the savage brute was going to decapitate—have their heads cut off?"

"Heads cut off? Sure!" assented Rabbit. "He cut off all him heads o' bally insects 'cause they want kill you, his awf'lly friend!"

"What?"

"Whaat?" drawled Rabbit. "Whaffor you all worked up, ole 'Fessor? You rec-'lect bally insect he want be brig'nd at Mazagan? You break him neck, huh? Fine! Awf'lly jolly. He fool brig'nd. All right. Then you come 'long me, an' we talk with Glawi at Marakeesh, an' brother of bally insect he want cut your head, huh? Two damfool. No all right. We come 'long make friends with caid Abu Bekr, an' then he want poison you, huh? No all right two time!

"Then bally insects they want cut our head an' no want care we friends o' Glawi big chief, huh? No all right three time! Glawi he come save us our head cut. Sure. Certain. Then Glawi 'corse he want punish bad wild mans an' cut off their heads Moor man way. An' now you want make big song, huh? What you want? You just same all 'nfidel. He never know what he want, by Sinfooloosir."

"H'm," growled O'Gorman. "Mighty queer idea of justice."

"'Tice! 'Tice?"

"Justice. Right. Sense of— —— it!" O'Gorman paused.

"Sense o' —— it?" queried Rabbit. "Sense o' ——"

"No, no, you —— fool!" exclaimed the professor. "Righteousness—I mean—well, what is good and just in punishing and rewarding."

"P'nish? 'Ward? I know him. Sure," assented Rabbit. "What Allah he say right?"

"That's the idea. Justice."

"Sure, I know him. Whaffor no justice? You dam fool. Wise man he always ask: what is justice?"

"Justice that this butcher here murders all these peoples of his merely because——"

"Just 'cause," cut in Rabbit quickly, "one fool brig'nd he want steal from you, an' you break him neck, huh? Just 'cause him brother man want to poison you, an' 'cause I your friend make him poison his own self, his brother want cut your head, an' want cut Rabbit head, too, huh? Just 'cause one liddle thing in Mazagan make plenty lot thing in Sidi Bughalim, huh? Fine!" added Rabbit scornfully. "You just like 'nfidel! You talk just same bally insect who want 'spute with big Sultan."

"What the devil do you mean?"

"I 'osopher. I want tell you somethin'," replied Rabbit.

Drawing out a cigaret, he squatted down beneath a tree. O'Gorman followed suit.

"Ullema, Moor man 'fessor just same you 'nfidel 'fessor," began Rabbit, "write in holy book. He say this: 'When won'erful Sultan Mulai Suliman (Soloman) he king of world, he have lots of trouble with him bally insects. 'Cause Allah he very cross, he no send lots food. So insects he want to starve. Suliman he say: All right, Allah no love you, but I, most won'erful king ever was, love you lots, 'though you just bally insects.' Un-'erstand?"

"Yes, yes."

"ALL right, ole chap! Then Mulai Suliman he tell him *Hadjib* (chamberlain) give bally insects food ev'ry day. But, 'cause they bally insects they make big song an' say most won'erful sultan no good, no got what you call 'justice.' All right; he tell all peoples come talk with him in front o' him house. He sit on roof Moor man way, y' know, 'Fessor, an' he want to tell 'em: 'Now you bally insects what you want? Food, huh? All right. You no awf'lly jolly 'cause I give you food? All people say no justice, huh? All right. Now, bally insects, you make choose what you want—justice o' my own self or you want justice o' Allah?' Then people, just 'cause they no 'osopher, they make big song for Allah. Fine! Sultan he tell people they have justice o' Allah. Then people make awf'lly happy an' make big dance. All right. Un'erstand?"

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"Yes, yes," assented the professor, amused and distracted.

"Next day people he come for food just same Allah justice. All right; *Hadjib* he give first man one camel o' food. Man he say, 'Fine!' Next man he get one donkey o' food. He say, 'All right.' Next man he get one grain. He say, 'Goddam!' Next man he get ten camel o' food. He say, 'Oh, Boy! *Hamdullah!*' (Praise to Allah.) Next man he get nothin', an' he want die. Then people want make big song an' talk with Sultan; they want say, what you want do? That man he get lots camels o' food an' we get nothin'. That not justice. We want die.

"Then Sultan he laugh him head off. He say, 'What you want talk, you bally insects, huh? I give you food ev'ry day. But is it no truly word that Allah give me all world an' ev'rythin' I want? *Douro*, scent, womans, mans, beefs, ev'rythin', huh? All right. But what Allah give Achmed, beggar man, who sit all day in big gate with big sickness, huh? You run 'long, you fool bally insects. Now I want give you just same Sultan justice."

"Quite a good story, Rabbit," said the the professor, chuckling. "But nevertheless that doesn't prove that Glawi is just in hacking off the heads of these poor devils."

"Sure, he right, 'cause, if Allah he no want Glawi cut off him head, Glawi no want cut off him head. That just same way bally insects want to 'spute with Mulai Suliman. Sure."

"That's pure sophist—well, how would you like to be one of those poor devils, Rabbit?"

"Devils? If Allah want Glawi cut my head, he cut sure. I want say, *Hamdullah.*"

"Thy will be done!" murmured the professor. "Extraordinary, extraordinary—yet——"

"What you want say, 'Fessor?"

"Nothing."

The moon peered through the edge of a wisp of cloud like a woman's veil blowing in the wind. The thrum of the *guinbris* and the wailing of the chant trailed on the scented air. For several moments they sat in silence, smoking. Suddenly announced Rabbit—

"'Fessor, ole chap, you talk too much."

"I?" ejaculated the astonished professor.

"Sure. I forget want tell you that Glawi he want ask you give him 'nfidel med'cine 'cause he sick in head."

"Sick in his head, is he?" exclaimed O'Gorman exultantly. "I hope he's sick in every portion of his anatomy."

"Whaffor?"

"Because— No! Eureka!" exclaimed the professor; then quietly, "Rabbit, can you get wax here in the town?"

"Wax? Sure. Buy him in market-place. Whaffor?"

"Medicine for the Glawi's head. You go and buy about six pounds of wax. Then you must have it warmed until it's quite soft and pliable. Take it to the Glawi and and make him put it on his bare head—it must be bare, recollect. Wrap it all round tight and push it well down close to the skull. Otherwise it will be no good. And I'll guarantee that his headache will be all gone, but you must bring it to me without breaking it up. Do you quite understand, Rabbit."

"Sure, 'Fessor, ole chap. I get you. I fix him fine. You want get picture o' him Glawi head, huh?"

"That's the idea," admitted the professor, grinning.

"Sure. Glawi he tell me, too, he want you go have dinner with him tomorrow night 'cause he you awf'lly friend. An', if you talk pretty, he want send you where you want—ev'rywhere in mountain look for head o' bally insects just same you want. Fine, huh?"

"Splendid!" assented the professor, quickened by the idea of further research. "We'll start for Tarudant the day after."

"No start for Tarudant," said Rabbit.

"Why not?"

"'Cause I want to get busy."

"Want to get busy? At what, for heaven's sake?"

"Listen; you hear *guinbri* he sing all time? All right. They want make big feast for marry."

"Marriage feast! For the love of heaven, who's going to get married? What—you?"

"Sure," assented Rabbit diffidently. "You no mind, my awf'lly friend?"

"Mind! No, of course not! If you must make a fool of yourself, that's not my business."

Rabbit puffed at his cigaret for a moment.

"'Fessor, ole chap, some time you awf'lly bally good 'osopher. You talk truly word.

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Two time I make damfool my own self. Now I want make three time—'cause awf'lly, jolly good make damfool 'casionally."

"But with whom here, for the love of heaven?"

"Lady you no want for your first wife, Khadijah!"

"What!"

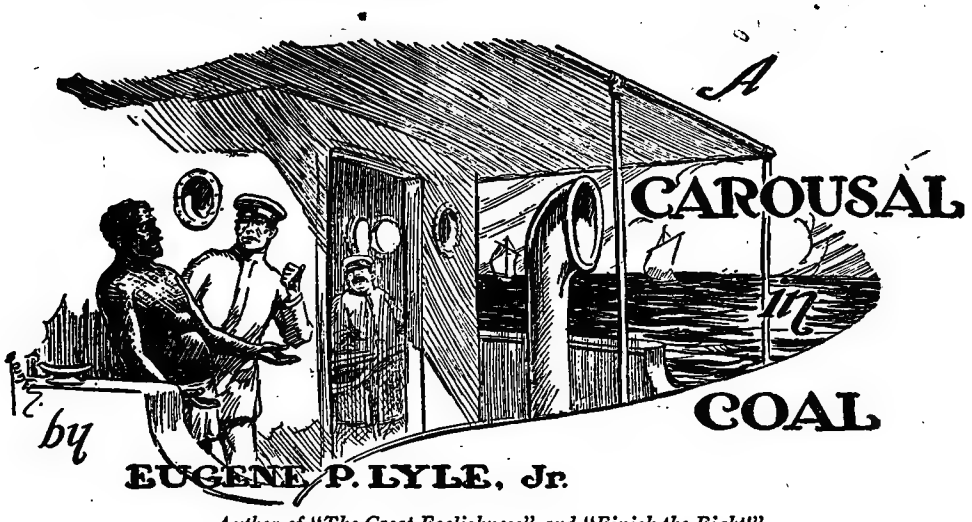
"Yes, him Khadijah," admitted Rabbit. "Awf'lly nice lady."

"Awfully nice lady!" echoed the professor. "Why—why, she's—she's a perfect little devil."

"Devil? 'Fessor, y' know, ole chap, you no un'erstand womans. 'Sides," he added reflectively, "one man he like drink white wine; 'nother man he like red wine; but Rabbit he like brandy. Listen, 'Fessor, my awf'lly bally friend; you hear voice of Moor man he speak!"

Above the thrum of the *guinbris* and the wild chanting rang out the call to prayer as delicately as a strand of woman's hair across the face of the moon:

"Alla—h il Alla—a—ah!
La-a ila-ha-a il Alla—a—ah!
Wa Mohamm—ed er-raso—o—o—ol
Alla——a——ah-h!"



Author of "The Great Foolishness" and "Finish the Fight!"

HIS name sounded like a butt of malmsey being rolled down to the cellar. Vanderledenhausen—something like that. So his passengers, unless they were Dutch, just called him captain. Or maybe, when nearing port, Captain Van, with a lingering undernote of affection and quite considerable esteem.

It happened so with the passenger for New York who boarded the *Prins Hendrik* at La Guaira. He had never seen a cleaner ship. Weeks since he had given over expecting clean ships in those Caribbean waters. He'd grown too used to sniffing for garlic before helping himself at table; and on one trip of nine days aboard a Cuban tramp from San Juan to Havana, he did not help himself at all until the fruit came along, which by the grace of Heaven came unpeeled.

More lately the stench of political corruption in the atmosphere of Venezuela had left him with a sense of material filth. So the cleanliness of the *Prins Hendrik*, beginning with the bright brass rail, soothed eyesight as a cool white bed soothes road-weary limbs. For minutes together, while waiting for her to sail, he luxuriated in it; luxuriated in just the cleanliness, soulfully resting up.

The *Prins Hendrik* was as spruce a tramp as ever weathered the gold-dusty lanes of the Spanish Main. But the passenger who got on at La Guaira couldn't place her that way, although he could place her very well as a Haarlem housewife's kitchen, scrubbed till the splinters faded gray. Or she was *King Cole's* private yacht—comfortable, wholly—supposing *King Cole* had been an orderly old soul. The passenger wondered whereto his cargo of bad humor had slipped

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off. He remembered distinctly bringing it on board. Grouch by grouch it had been gathering for days up there in Caracas. Since Castro was up there, rarely did the stranger ever get away without such a cargo. Yet here in *King Cole's* holystoned yacht the passenger for New York feasted his eyes on deck and woodwork and tile ornamentation and saw that they were clean. Clean! Enough; he wanted no finer symbol. He knew that white men lived. He'd almost forgotten.

The ship docked before daybreak next morning at Puerto Cabello, a few miles farther up the Venezuelan coast. Cabello means a hair, and Puerto Cabello means that a vessel there needs but a hair for anchor chain. Well, maybe it is a real placid sort of haven; but opposite the town, where the bay is narrow, Castro's enemies languished in dungeons or, chained together, toiled like peons while barefoot soldiers prodded them with carbines. Also, although the old Spanish fort out at the point looked squat and desolate and as inert as a lion's carcass, yet Castro had mounted one of his seven new Schneider-Canet guns there, and the silence of the long black spout rather suggested much turbulence in leash. The hair that would not be broken in this calm resembled therefore the straw that was predestined to break the camel's back.

The passenger for New York was the only American, the others being miscellaneous, mostly Venezuelans for Curaçao, so that he was also the only one for whom the shackled prisoners in the blistering sun across the bay were a novelty. He watched them for a time. Through his glasses he could see their soil-weighted tatters, their nakedness, the despair in their drooping bodies. He turned his back to the rail.

"Captain, when do we get out of here?"

The captain sat near by in a basket chair. He was a tall, thick-set, purple-weathered, quiet, slow kind of man with a slow, heavy smile and slow twinkling of close-lidded, seafaring eyes. The smile under his thick black mustache and the crinkling of the purple tan about the eyes above his high cheek-bones indicated mirth within—which was mirth that mostly stayed within and was inwardly mulled over with slow Dutch relish.

The captain had probably decided that he was going to like the passenger for New York. There hadn't been any cargo-shifting of grievances when he stepped aboard. No indignantly ejaculated wonderment that such things could be possible, sir, in our present Twentieth Century, and how Civilization and Uncle Sam could hold aloof a minute longer.

Like a scholar and a gentleman the passenger had mercifully spared captain, mates, doctor, chief and crew. By some rare and precious divination he seemed to know that every passenger for New York before him always unloaded the same astounding and original reflections and a budget of identically the same new and startling and incredible experiences.

Accordingly he did not mention that he had had to buy his ticket twenty-four hours in advance so that that despot Castro could visé the passenger list. He did not mention the four *bolivars* it had cost him for a permit to leave the country, when Castro deigned to permit him to leave.

He did not mention that his baggage had been seized and examined and then sequestered until just before the ship sailed. Nor did he mention the fees he paid. Nor the dock charges levied on himself and again on his baggage, which would have been levied had he not touched the dock at all. He mentioned none of the many items of that cargo of ill-humor which he had brought on board, and for such rare restraint the captain was not ungrateful. To Sandy Hook the way was long and lonely, and Captain Van always liked to have at least one possible human being in the first cabin.

He answered his passenger's question with no dread of encouraging a bore. He supposed they'd get away by noon, soon as the train from Valencia came down with a consignment of natives. He said it with no strain at being communicative but as if the other were an old acquaintance.

The passenger nodded and strolled around the deck to the wharf side. Directly he strolled back again. He had found Venezuela on that other side, too. The captain glanced up at him in slow, quizzical sympathy. It was the passenger's turn to be grateful. He sensed an invitation to fellowship.

"Captain, I see you're taking on water from that plug on the dock."

The captain nodded, encouragingly even.

"And you stand for their ferocious

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charge? The dock concession is only one more name for that little runt Castro. You stand for it?"

"Two hundred fifty *bolivars*—fifty dollars," said the captain.

"But you've just left Trinidad. Tomorrow you're at Curaçao. You don't need water here."

"No," agreed the captain, "but they charge the fifty all the same. So——"

The half shrug, half wave of the arm, indicated that he took what he paid for.

THE train down from Valencia was normally late, yet was in time for its consignment of natives to reach the ship by one o'clock. They were respectable provincials of the interior—from the coffee hills or cattle pampas—maybe a score odd, or several families, children, parents, aunts, uncles, all tawny-olive and one withered persimmon of a grandmother.

Their quaint finery, their ancient splint-leather trunks, their eager-eyed bewilderment showed their innocence of the world outside. Their quick compliance with every order or direction of the steward, their "*Si, señor,*" "*Con licencia, señor,*" showed equally the stately breeding that Castilian forbears had left them from the world outside, although the passenger for New York knew that they would eat with their knives. And as for their staterooms—after the first night out the steward knew that in there the belted cattle of Holland would turn faint. But their utter innocence is the point here. To imagine among them the deep cunning and bold spirit of revolutionary conspiracy! And yet . . . .

Anyhow, things began to happen with cumulative official hysteria.

A glossy Vandyked captain of the port, with four stars—four—on the shoulder-straps of his white duck uniform, and white cotton gloves lashed in the gold tassel of his basket-hilted saber, came on board. He came with a worried, uniformed aide and a stolid, browned escort and, rising slightly on his toes, informed the ship's captain that his excellency, the Señor Presidente of the republic, in the Yellow House at Caracas had but just within the hour telegraphed information and orders of the gravest moment.

The ship's captain listened patiently, matching stiff ceremonial unction with unruffled Dutch-uncle tolerance. The frenzy of what was of the gravest moment broke over him like spray on the eternal rocks. It was not news for him. It was routine. The interested passenger for New York perceived that he was used to it and maybe a little bit wearied of it.

Having heard the will and pleasure of the Yellow House at Caracas, the skipper ducked a nod of assent and jerked a sweeping motion toward the salon stairway. The ship was at the disposal of the captain of the port. As the captain of the port bowed and entered, followed by aide and platoon, the skipper noticed the passenger for New York.

"Better slip down and lock up your cigars—lock up everything. They'll search your cabin, too. The steward tags them as close as he can, but afterward there is always something that turns itself up missing."

"But—who are they after, Captain? What's wrong?"

"A fugitive," said the captain. "Always a fugitive they are after."

"Still, the four-starred Hennessy forgot to put on his white gloves. It's serious this time, Captain. The little parboiled brother is scared."

The captain tranquilly thought so, too. The scaredest of the lot, he fancied, would be the little excellent *señor* runt up in the Yellow House at Caracas. For the fugitive now was General Gregorio Pomposino, a well and unfavorably known pepper-box patriot who revolutionized whenever anybody higher up hurt his feelings. Until night before last he was commandant of the Carabobo zone, but President Castro had hurt his feelings, and he had vanished, having first intercepted the quartermaster-general's wallet of paper money designed for the payment of his troops.

He would naturally be going to the neutral Dutch island of Curaçao to embrace other festering patriots in exile and open an office for his revolution. The idea was to stop him and seal him up in a substantial dungeon. Meantime the Yellow House would have it duly certified that he was not on board the *Prins Hendrik*.

"And they'll look for him in your whisky flask," added Captain Van. "Better lock things up."

He himself went below to play host. That was more routine. "Four-Star Hennessy" would not forget the *Prins Hendrik's* Moselle wines. The port captain was never that scared. He was not to be fooled on

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labels, either. The labels were very genuine, therefore.

General Gregorio Pomposino appeared not to be on board, although the ship was rummaged from engine room to chart-house. Then the passenger list was checked off, passengers answering to their names, and those from Venezuela showing their Castrian permits. Still there was no General Gregorio Pomposino.

Something had to be done. Something more in the way of authority had to be demonstrated. The contingent of innocents from Valencia were the ones to reap the cheap little whirlwind. From Valencia, were they? On the morning train? Ah! But Valencia was in the State of Carabobo, and it was from Carabobo that the traitor Pomposino had vanished in the night—truly, *señores*, a dark coincidence.

The captain of the port glared particularly at the withered grandmother. Would they now persist in the declaration that they were guiltless of all knowledge of the said Pomposino? To the littlest child they all pleaded that they were, indeed, guiltless.

"*Basta!*" said the captain of the port indignantly. "Off—off with them! The judge shall decide."

Accordingly, the Valencianos were herded down the plank and off to the judge. Directly a barefoot squad and an ox-cart came for their luggage. The judge in his court would examine that also. These people must have some revolutionary correspondence about them somewhere.

FOLLOWED a drowsy tropical lull on shipboard. The skipper came under the awning and eased himself down into a deck chair beside his passenger for New York. The latter grinned.

"Have to sail without 'em, maybe?"

The captain peered slantwise out at the descending sun.

"Um, they have got yet a chance."

He did not care to lose twenty-odd fares.

Nevertheless, as the sun neared the violet rim of the world three hours later, he took the bridge, and there was the clock-work bustle of casting off. The engines started, and the inert hull breathed with awakening life. The dock slipped away, and green water widened between. At the same time in the street behind the wharf houses rose a tearful shout—and more shouts—and the rattling of hack wheels and the lumbering screech of an ox-cart.

The skipper looked once and telegraphed down to the engine room. The incipient throbbing of the great body changed to a shiver, then died back into inertia. Lines were thrown; the dock seemed to be pulled out to the ship again, and the gangway slid down. The skipper leaned from the end of the bridge and indicated that his twenty-odd lost but reclaimed ones were to move with much rapidity of motion. Up the plank they excitedly, happily trod each other's heels, still chattering of guiltlessness. Behind them sailors and stewards dragged antique splint-leather impedimenta back on board.

Once more life pulsed through the ship, and the green water was widening between dock and hull when— This time it was a cannon-shot from the old Spanish fortress out at the point. The sunset gun!

Now, no vessel might leave a Venezuelan port after sunset. At Puerto Cabello, if it has not passed the gun's muzzle for the open sea outside before that gun belches forth the proclamation of sunset, it has to remain in the bay till morning. Which means another day's fee to be paid to the dock concession, whether the vessel again touches the dock or not. Furthermore, the gun out at the point that had to be passed was one of those new Schneider-Canets. Wherefore the *Prins Hendrik* lay back against the dock for the night.

The passenger for New York, big with vicarious indignation, went and met the captain coming down from the bridge.

"You had five minutes of sun yet," he said. "And, anyhow, they held that bunch all afternoon just to make you miss your getaway. The petty grafters! I don't seem to be able to like them at all."

"Oh, well," said the skipper.

That was all he said. "Oh, well," like that. He should have been the indignant one. It was his ship.

"Oh, well," echoed the passenger with a trifle of malice, "maybe the little queen hasn't any spare war-ships to make her little Dutch buccaneers respected anymore. Uh-huh, not like the old days. Seems to me there was a Van Tromp once. And wasn't there a De Ruyter—no sun-baked wart of a Castro ever got ahead of those boys. Oh, well, let's not mention it. We're so happy in our Sunday-school, ain't we? Honest

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to goodness, Captain, I'm that grateful they didn't take a notion to saw your leg off that——"

The captain's big, purple-speckled hand was as capable as a grizzly's paw, but only good-humoredly was it laid on the passenger's shoulder. Indeed, the act was a sort of mute outburst of whole-souled joviality.

"Sometimes yet we manage to take care of ourselves, we poor Dutchmen," he said meekly, and the Vanderledenhausen mirth that was mulled over inwardly betokened that the statement was no mere generality. "Once in this same port——"

The passenger brightened hopefully. The story would be a good one. But there was an interruption. Straightway things woke from twilight quiescence and began happening again.

"Why," exclaimed the passenger, "it's Hennessy!"

True enough, the trig little four-starred captain of the port had climbed over the rail from the dock, the plank not having been lowered again, and was making up the deck for the skipper. The froth of great excitation was obvious in his haste. Beaded importance sweated from his brow and trembled on the tip of his saffron beak.

"You now have all night," the skipper greeted him in his own tongue. "Search my ship as much as you like."

"No, no, no," protested the Venezuelan. "It is worse, worse, oh, greatly worse! There is no coal——"

At the word a shrewd glow came into the skipper's eyes.

"But we must have coal. The republic must have coal—oh, instantly, *señor*. In the name of the republic I——"

"You what, *señor?*"

"I—that is, I—I do hereby requisition of the coal in your ship that we need. Necessity of state, *señor*. Time of national peril. Act of——"

"But we carry the Dutch flag," the skipper mentioned slowly.

"The Dutch flag? What, sir, what cares the sovereign republic for the Dutch flag?"

The skipper pondered.

"I was not thinking of the sovereign republic," he confessed. "I was thinking of Holland. If a friendly nation deprives a ship flying the Dutch flag of her coal, Holland would— Oh, I don't know. I was just thinking."

"But—but—but you do not understand, *mi Capitan,*" cried the captain of the port. "It is a crisis for my country, and I must save her, by the *Señor Presidente's* orders. I must have but a little of your coal. We but just learn that a schooner of rebels is leaving Curaçao. They will pick up the traitor Pomposino on the way, who will lead them to our coast and rear the standard of revolt. But our navy must go forth and destroy them and save the *patria*. Only, there is no coal—no coal—no coal!"

It was bad bargaining. It is always bad bargaining to let a Dutchman or Yankee or Scotchman know your need. The twinkling glow in the skipper's eye was implacable.

"Therefore," squeaked the fierce little caballero, "I requisition—requisiton——"

"As far as you like," grunted the skipper.

"But we will leave you enough, oh, abundantly enough, to reach Curaçao."

The skipper shrugged non-committally. After all, it might not be enough, and Holland . . . He was only thinking again.

The hot-blooded native flung up his arms miserably. Always is it so. The Equator's bluff deflates before the calling thereof by the North's slow phlegm.

"But of course we will pay you for the coal," the Venezuelan declared suddenly.

"Won't you be seated, *señor?*" asked the skipper.

"We will pay you fifty *bolivars* the ton."

The skipper smiled.

"One hundred."

"Oh, *mi Capitan,* but in Curaçao you can buy it at forty!"

"Um," said the skipper, "so can you."

"Cruel, cruel!" mocked the Venezuelan. He had brilliantly reflected that it was as easy to promise a hundred as fifty. "But so be. The republic must accept. Three hundred tons, let us say, at a hundred then: thirty thousand *bolivars*. You shall have an order for the amount on the national treasury."

It was at this juncture that affection and quite considerable esteem for Captain Vanderledenhausen began to warm the cockles of the New York passenger's heart. For Captain Van smiled sadly at mention of an order on the national treasury and moodily shook his head.

The jet-black point of the native's Vandyke quivered.

"The *señor* then questions the integrity of the national——"

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"Money," said the skipper.

"The money shall be paid to the agent of your company in Caracas."

Captain Van fondly stroked his ship.

"Here," he said.

"God bless the Dutch!" murmured the passenger for New York.

And "Here," it appeared, was really where the money had to be paid, because an oft-suffering sea-captain had forgotten the rest of the dictionary. "Here," he said, softly stroking his beloved ship.

DURING the still watches of the night the city of Puerto Cabello—bankers, brokers, importers, exporters—writhed under a Castrian plague of forced loans, and by daylight the captain of the port was back on board the *Prins Hendrik* with the money, canvas sacks of it, borne by aides. The skipper indulgently culled out plugged pieces and those fashioned in lead. When these were replaced, he showed them where he kept his coal.

The passenger for New York soon tired of watching them coal ship. He was chuckling, however, when he abandoned the grimy spectacle. The Venezuelan navy had been drawn up alongside the *Prins Hendrik*. It looked like a condemned New York harbor tug, and it was. But any one could tell from the machine guns and shields that it was a navy. There was also a slight auxiliary—Castro's yacht and gunboat—with a Maxim fore and aft.

A horde of tawny, blackened, greasily dripping, almost naked roustabouts worked like a string of ants in and out the hold of the *Prins Hendrik*, bearing great hampers, or *colotes*, on their leveled backs. The man-beast's neck, when he toiled up from the hold, was rigid and taut cords pulsed with strain; for the great basket, hung from a band around the forehead, was coal-laden. Then the coal was shot down chutes into the bunkers of the empty navy.

For a while the New York passenger was interested in the method of keeping tally, but it did not hold him long. They had weighed eight or ten *colotes* of coal separately and came to agree on eleven and three-seventh *colotes* as making one ton. After which it was simply a question of counting the *colotes* that passed out of the *Prins Hendrik's* bunkers into those of the Venezuelan navy.

Each side kept a tally, and the *Prins Hendrik* furnished the stationery: paper tabs, pencils and Moselle-labeled wine—but that's not stationery. The captain of the port and the admiral of the navy and a dozen other starred officers seemed to expect it, though. While on shipboard were they not the ship's guests? Yes, surely. So the Dutch purser told the Dutch steward to bring the wine.

The guests found that they could count the *colotes* very handily from the shaded deck by leaning forward in their chairs—easy chairs brought up from the salon—and peering between the rails down upon the processional toilers. They—the guests—were soon very sociable and even gay over their labors, chatting, sipping wine, until keeping tally was only incidental and rather interfered.

Often the purser, who kept tally for the ship, had to remind the Venezuelan tally-keeper that there went another *colote*. Venezuela's tally was kept by relays. The captain of the port began it, but the third glass made him drowsy. And he had been up all night; so he passed the tab to the admiral. The admiral passed it on to his chief of staff, and so it reached the humblest aide and stuck.

When the top sheet on the tab was filled with tally marks, or series of four uprights crossed by a fifth, the captain of the port was roused enough to sign it at the bottom as a receipt for that much coal delivered. Then the sheet was torn off and gathered in by the purser, and the tally was continued on the next sheet.

What the passenger departed chuckling about was this: he had been standing a little apart and against the rail so that he looked down directly into the *colotes* as they passed out the side of the *Prins Hendrik* on tawny-skinned backs; and he began to notice that not every *colote* was filled to the rim. Furthermore, no tawny-skinned man-beast was quite patriot enough to complain if a *colote* pulled twenty-five or fifty pounds lighter on his harnessed brow. In this respect the Dutch stokers down in the hold, who did the shoveling, became more and more merciful, and on deck the steward brought more wine when asked.

The passenger for New York owned one of those little baby typewriters that collapses into a suitcase, and he used it to transcribe orders into his loose-leaf order-book.

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While Castro's navy went on coaling, he had the salon to himself. At one of the tables under an open port-hole he was soon busy transcribing his Caracas orders.

Here Captain Vanderledenhausen found him and stood over him for a while, watching with a sailor's child-like interest in a landsman's new trinkets. He gazed on the garrulous little typewriter and was gravely fascinated by all the little hall-marks of the modernity of Twentieth Century commerce. But Captain Van was doing more thinking in his childlike sailor nutmeg than his live-wire friend, the passenger, suspected.

"Have you got there any of this—I suppose you call it—duplicating paper, what?"

The passenger pounded seventeen keys, slammed the carriage back for a new line and glanced up curiously.

"Sure," he said, snatching out several sheets from under his papers. "This the stuff—carbon paper?"

"Carbon paper?" repeated the captain. "Carbon—carbon—*car-bón?*"

The passenger looked yet more curiously. The stolid weathered face over him was naïveté itself. But why the play on words? *Carbón?* The passenger had been hearing that word frequently of late. It was Spanish for "coal."

"Oughtn't *carbón* paper to be black?" queried the skipper. "Eh, so it is, so it is. Mind if I take a sheet or two? Back in Rotterdam the *vrouw* likes 'em to mark these here foolish embroidery patterns."

"All you want, Cap, all you want," said the passenger cordially. Then to himself, as the captain returned on deck, "That Dutchman!"

One would not have thought that the little sun-baked roustabouts could work so fast, but the coaling of the navy was really very quickly done, and the tally-sheets showed three hundred tons transferred to the last *colote*, besides three-sevenths of a *colote* over, which Captain Vanderledenhausen did not charge for. By midafternoon, then, the *Prins Hendrik* whistled a salute to the last tally-keeping guest ashore and headed out for the open Caribbean, preceded by the smoke-belching Venezuelan navy issuing forth valiantly to save the republic and allay the Castrian fidgets up in the Yellow House at Caracas.

They—on the *Prins Hendrik*—had closed the port-holes because of coal dust sifting in, and the New York passenger, sweltering at his work, was grateful for the air brought him down the companionway by the ship's motion. He kept on working. He did not want to see the deck until the sailors had flooded and polished it spotless again. But, soon after they were past the fortress and at sea, he folded his typewriter into its case. The skipper had come down from the bridge for a bottle of beer. He sat himself opposite the passenger and told the steward to bring two glasses.

"Those three hundred tons," remarked the passenger invitingly, "made a dent in your coal-bin, I guess?"

"Um, they ought to." The skipper looked at the passenger in a troubled sort of way. "You see, we didn't hardly have three hundred tons to start with."

"Didn't have—" The passenger checked himself and considered the matter seriously. "Three hundred tons from less than three hundred, and enough left to steam this bark to Curaçao? No, Captain Van," he announced with conviction, "that don't subtract right, somehow."

"It kerflummixes me too," confessed the captain. "But there's the money, right over there in the purser's safe. You saw it yourself—thirty thousand *bolivars*, all good ones—almost near six thousand dollars. That adds right for three hundred tons, and don't what adds right got to subtract right? Sure! And they know they got the coal. They left their receipts for it, three hundred tons and three-sevenths of a *colote*, or 3,429 *colotes*. I let the three-sevenths go for boot," added the skipper magnanimously.

He laid the Venezuelans' signed tally-sheets on the table and sat back with his glass of beer and waited.

The passenger did not perceive that there was any reply to be made, yet he had a feeling that a renewal of the conversation was expected of him. Mechanically he fingered the tally-sheets, and the captain went on waiting. The captain was patient about it.

AFTER the manner of children and the illiterate with pencil in hand, the convivial Venezuelans had tallied largely and broadly, using up sheet after sheet until there was quite a bundle of them. Scarcely eight tons of coal were registered to a sheet. About half-way down

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the stack the passenger looked closer at one of the sheets. It was vaguely different, somehow. Finally he took one long, steady look, not at the sheet, but at the captain. A slow grin gradually crinkled up the captain's weathered features. More slowly an answering grin spread over the passenger's clean-shaven business face. But the passenger austerely repressed his grin.

"Captain," he said with severity, "this tally-sheet is a—carbon copy!"

"No?" exclaimed the captain.

"It is, to the Venezuelan's signature at the bottom."

"Well, well!" murmured the captain.

"I suppose," mused the passenger aloud, "that a sheet of the carbon paper I gave you got slipped into that tab the Venezuelans were keeping tally on."

"By chinks," declared the captain, brightening, "that may be was how it happened."

"And the edges of the carbon paper must have been trimmed, or even a soused Venezuelan would have noticed it."

"Well, well!" murmured the captain.

"And then," the passenger went on inexorably, "when the Venezuelan signed the top sheet on the tab as a receipt for that much coal, some Dutch pirate of a purser tore off two sheets, with the carbon paper between, so that he had receipts for twice as much coal." The passenger laid a hand to his side, in distress. "Talk about—" he whispered. "Talk about the Scotch being a canny people!"

"Oh, well," said the captain meekly.

"Oh, well, and you with your embroidery patterns! And seven tons of coal and over to a pattern! At a hundred *bolivars*—twenty dollars—a ton, that makes it a hundred-and-forty-dollar pattern—or something 'long about sixteen hundred and eighty dollars a dozen." Rapidly the passenger sorted out the carbon copies from the pack and counted them. "Nine, ten, eleven—great day in the morning! Thirteen! Captain V-V-Van, the *vrouw* in Rotterdam is sure going to appreciate your taste in embroidery."

"I always try to bring her and the children some little present each trip," mentioned the captain. "Now what," he broke into Dutch at the cabin-boy in the doorway, "are you doing there?"

The cabin-boy said that he had come to tell the captain that one of the Puerto Cabello roustabouts had hidden himself instead of going ashore and was trying to come up to occupy a stateroom in the first cabin.

"A roustabout?" echoed the captain blankly. "A rousta— Uh!"

It was the jarred grunt of a man remembering something he ought not to have forgotten. Yet his lost expression was not exactly a total loss, either.

"Go," he ordered the boy, "go back down, and give him my compliments——"

"To the roustabout, sir?"

"Yes, stupid. No—wait. Tell the purser to go, instead, and my compliments and will the roustabout be so good as to step here a moment. Quickly, now. Haste, I say."

Then, when the boy had gone, the captain told the steward to bring a bottle of Moselle and a third glass; after which he sat back with his beer and waited, peering sociably across at the New York passenger.

The purser came, soberly ushering into the salon what resembled a lump of indignant ebon butter, otherwise the stowaway roustabout. Rivulets streaked the grimy body; hair, lashes, and eyebrows were coal-laden, and his loin-cloth was of the same lamp-black as his plump, naked paunch. Only the whites of his angry eyes were white, and they were very white.

The captain, with a loving glance at the New York passenger, arose and advanced toward the roustabout, holding the uncorked wine and the third glass.

"General Pomposino," he hailed the fat, streaked apparition, "your health, sir."

The naked fat man glared outraged hauteur until he perceived the bottle; whereupon he snatched it, sinking into a chair, and with Moselle washed down layer on layer of coal formation. Thus he cleared passageway.

"*Dios mio,*" the torrent came, "and I have worked! I, Gregorio Pomposino, have worked! Like a peon, conveying *colotes!* And for that, *Señor Capitan,* is it that I pay you three thousand *bolivars* for my ticket to your arid isle of Curaçao? Before the light yesterday morning when I stole on board, you said that I would be but only a little, little time for thought in the hole in the coal. False, false traitor! By noon you said you would be at sea and to me you would restore my clothes in the most expensive cabin *de lujo.*

"By noon of yesterday, *señor!* But what

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since? *Dios*, what since? The long day, the long night, you still do not go to sea, and I am there in the coal, forgot. And this morning arrive the tyrant's minions, and they begin to dig out the coal, and I am imminently to be revealed and denounced and to go into Castro's dungeons—I, Pomposino! Ah, not so! Not so, *señor!* Rather I work. Even I.

"So in the dark of the pit I emerge, and I steal the *colote* of a loafing beast who rests, and all the hours that are decades I convey the *colote* until it is finished. Then must I find another hole in the roasting Inferno which is this ship's insides, and thus I go not ashore but fry in patience, martyr to my dear *patria's* liberties. I, who have paid three thousand *bolivars* for a cabin *de lujo!* Blessed name, more wine!"

In the crescendo of the martyr patriot's peroration, Captain Van bowed his head repentantly behind one hand and gravely winked at the passenger for New York.

General Pomposino, very like a scorched porcelain image recently fallen into the soot, found a second bottle before him. Besides, he could not understand English, and the passenger for New York upbraided the skipper.

"No hero, Captain," he said, "likes to help coal a navy in order that it may steam forth to shoot him full of holes. What's more, thanks to the coal you sold them, they will capture his revolutionist friends leaving Curaçao in that schooner."

"Oh, that schooner!" said the captain with a shrug.

"Captain," demanded the New York passenger abruptly, "is there a schooner?"

"Sure, there's a schooner."

"That left Curaçao for this coast yesterday?"

"Why, sure."

"How do you know, Captain?"

The skipper, being cornered, jerked a thick thumb upward.

"Wireless," he said. "We pick things out of the air."

The New Yorker pondered.

"Yes, you modernized buccaneer," he said, "and you send things back into the air, back to that rock full of more Dutchmen, Curaçao, and from there by cable and telegraph to the Yellow House, scaring poor little Castro out of his pajamas. Say, Cap, what's in that schooner? Revolutionists?"

The captain made a deprecatory pass with his beer glass.

"No, not revolutionists."

"But the Venezuelan navy will capture it tonight with great valor," urged the New Yorker. "Captain, what's in that schooner?"

The captain shrugged helplessly.

"Captain, what is in that——"

A spluttering grunt of surrender rose from the captain's chest.

"Coal," he choked. "Coal! The Venezuelan navy has been expecting it for a month, only they didn't send the money."

The passenger for New York got himself thoughtfully on deck. Behind lay the fortress at Puerto Cabello like the carcass of a lion. He recalled that the Spaniards had built it to repel Dutch pirates from Curaçao.

"Oh, you," he apostrophized the fortress. "You're obsolete!"

Adventure

BY STEWART McKEE

ADVENTURE is the thing you didn't expect;
Breaking the trail to some unknown ahead;
Either you win—and all the world seems tame,
Or else adventure wins—and leaves you dead.

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The AFFAIRS of MEN

by
WILLIAM DAVID BALL

WHEN his tired horse stumbled and threw him, in a little dry cañon miles out in the sand wastes of Arizona, Bartholomew Webb got to his feet with narrowed eyes and indrawn lips. He stepped to the horse's left shoulder, seized the reins close to the bit, swung his foot backward and kicked twice—long, vicious kicks that landed far under the belly.

The horse grunted explosively and suddenly spraddled his four legs outward, back humped and head low. The man gave a quick, furtive look around him—and then laughed at his nervousness.

"Guess I fixed you," he growled with a shrug. "But you weren't worth much in the first place—and there's not enough water for the both of us."

He threw off the saddle, made up a pack of his blanket and provisions and strode off across the sand.

As a rule, Bartholomew Webb succeeded in suppressing the streak of wanton cruelty that was forever shooting up from the depths of his nature. It came to the surface only in his unguarded moments—moments when there was no danger of his being detected. He stood somewhat in awe of the judgment of man; in the judgment of God he did not believe.

Webb, a rock-like man, was an expert on mines and mining development. Men in Denver, where mining experts are plentiful, deferred to his opinions. That he should find himself now, tramping the scorched sands of Arizona, with barely enough water to last him to the claim which he was to examine, angered him.

Sixty miles he had come from the railroad and the last water. Buck's Spring, a few miles back, had been unexpectedly dry. He was a fool, he told himself, to come out on such a hare-brained journey. To make a rendezvous in this God-forsaken country seventy miles from nowhere! True, that sample of stibnite, with its seventy per cent. antimony and thirty per cent. sulfur, was rare stuff, and if that fellow—what was his name? Kenyon. If Kenyon's claim was half as good as he said it was, there was big money in sight.

And God knew Bartholomew Webb needed money right now—needed it badly. Things of late had been going decidedly wrong. Unless money—big money—were forthcoming quickly, certain matters might come to light—matters connected with the manipulation of corporation funds and the laws of the Commonwealth of Colorado. On that he did not care to reflect.

Why the devil couldn't Kenyon have fixed his business affairs so that they could have come in together like white men, instead of making a crazy appointment like this! Such a barren, unspeakable land—not even a trail. Everything burned, lifeless! And the cursed silence! It was sinister—like a gloating, living thing with a grudge. It pressed down from the air—gave him a feeling—like being watched.

He hitched his belt tighter with an impatient jerk and lengthened his stride.

Although there was neither road nor trail, yet his way was plain—up cañons straight as though run by a surveyor's transit, across twisted, ragged arroyos and over low, endless sand-dunes—toward two

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prongs of granite that curved skyward like a gigantic horseshoe.

It was four o'clock in the afternoon when he picked his way along the cañon wall, reached the base of those two prongs of granite and threw himself down in the shade of a boulder. This was the rendezvous.

The last drop from his canteen had been swallowed an hour ago. Already his tongue felt like cracking. Suppose Kenyon didn't come? Well, that was a chance he'd have to take. He's taken big chances all his life. Curious what cowards men were. They trembled at death and at everything else they didn't understand.

Two figures, approaching along his own trail, caught his eye. They developed into a man and woman, both young, both walking vigorously. Reaching Webb's side, the young man threw off his burden with a grunt of relief. The woman busied herself opening the pack.

Webb reached for a canteen.

"Well," he complained, "found your precious Buck's Spring dry, didn't you, Kenyon? Lord, I'm thirsty."

"I can't understand it," replied the young man thoughtfully. "I've never seen that spring dry this time of year. But it's dry all right. Good thing we came in an auto. My car's back at Buck's Spring—couldn't get any farther. Got a barrel of water on it."

"Good. But why did you bring your wife? This is no country for a woman."

The tanned face of Kenyon became momentarily serious.

"It's no kids' playground, that's a fact. But rats! Grace, here, has kept up with me many a time on the hike. Twenty miles in half a day isn't anything for her. She's never seen the prospect and she wanted to come. Remember, I told you I'd get in the other way—from Cyanite? Well, I had to go to Rexburg. You see we—we—" He paused, stammering boyishly. "Grace and I've been married only two weeks—just before her father died. He left some things to kind of straighten out. That's why I came to Denver, Mr. Webb, and asked you to come right out and size up the claim. Got to have some credit quick."

"I see," nodded Webb dryly. "Well, if the claim's what you say it is, you'll get better than credit. I'll raise cash. Your idea is to build a road from here to Buck's Spring?"

"That's it; a road for heavy trucks. We'll freight to Rexburg on the railroad—seventy miles."

For several moments they chatted over the details of the work, Kenyon with simple enthusiasm, Webb with cynical reserve."

"How much water did you bring?" asked Webb presently.

"Two extras. We've three full canteens left, just enough to do us nicely till we get back to the car. By the way, Mr. Webb, we ran across a roan horse on a ridge about fifty yards from your trail. Yours, wasn't it? Poor devil nickered and walked right up to me. What happened?"

"The fool beast fell and hurt himself on the rocks," lied Webb.

"I saw a horse act like him just once before, but it wasn't from no fall." There was a touch of coolness in the young man's voice. "There's still a little grass he can find this time of year, but he won't last over tomorrow without water."

Kenyon turned to watch his wife.

The woman had finished laying out the provisions. She was little more than a girl, supple and lithe of body, with an easy swing to her limbs that told of life in the open. Her features, hardly less tanned than those of her husband, were delicately molded and held something of refinement. She seated herself by the little fire.

"Fred wanted to shoot the horse," she said quietly. "But he'd left his guns in the trunk at Phœnix. I was glad of it. It was pitiful the way the poor horse begged for water. I made Fred go back a mile to the automobile and carry him a bucketful."

Webb gasped, and Kenyon's face went red.

"You haven't got a gun on you, Webb?" asked Kenyon hastily.

"No, never carry one."

"The horse ought to be shot. If you'd 'a' seen the poor devil's eyes— We'll go back through the second cañon!"

The woman, gazing dreamily into the fire, spoke again.

"If we had a gun, of course, it would be right to put him out of his misery. You never went into the desert without your guns before, Fred. Maybe—sometimes I think there are reasons for these things. Life is never destroyed until it has served its purpose. Maybe God has some further

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use for that horse's life—some part in the affairs of men."

Webb made no effort to conceal his surprize and amusement. His lined face creased into a scornful smile.

"Do you think," he rasped, "that what you call God has anything to do with that white-livered plug back there in the sand-hills? That the brute is going to live two or three days more just so God can mix up in the 'affairs of men'? Absurd!"

Kenyon stared gravely at the expert.

"You don't believe, then, there's anything higher than a man's own brain?"

"I do not!" stated Webb emphatically. "Natural law governs everything. I don't mean that any man can get all the natural laws; those he doesn't get, he's got to take chances with. Outside of that, the things that happen to him are the results of his own actions—goods he's ordered a long time in advance—cause and effect."

"No, no—it ain't that easy! It—" Young Kenyon stopped his protest to wave a hand to the burned hills around them. "I've heard folks call the desert hell. It is. But there's something else there, some purpose that keeps things balanced like—You can just guess at it when you lie out on the sand at night, with the stars watching and the stillness so thick you can pretty near stretch out and grab hold of it. I can't describe it for you—I can't get it myself—but it's there. It's the thing that makes your effect 'square up' with your cause."

Webb laughed sourly.

"Your God seems to show his liking for this delightful desert by hanging a little closer to the ground here than he does in other places. In my opinion, he's got mighty poor taste. Let's eat and turn in."

THE next morning, Webb, with growing wonder, traced the vein of stibnite from hole to hole. Kenyon had made a marvelous strike. For the moment, however, the mining expert made no comment. Despite the money in sight, he was ill at ease. Since he had left the railroad the preceding day a vague oppression had grown upon him—a feeling of being in an alien land where everything, down to the blistered rocks and the gnarled sage, watched him with hostile eyes. It was crazy. He'd been in desert places before. He'd get out of here.

The vein was at the base of a cliff, at the contact between two formations, basaltic and granitic. Webb followed the outcroppings for a sheer quarter of a mile, in fact until he was stopped by the jutting wall of the main cañon. He walked slowly back to camp.

"What do you think of it?" cried Kenyon eagerly.

Webb hesitated, his thick lips pursed out thoughtfully.

"Well, it looks to me as if there ought to be a couple of million in it," he pronounced.

Kenyon choked.

"Lordy!" he yelled. "I knew it was good, but I never dreamed— Say, you'll put up the money for the developments?"

Webb grunted at the boy's enthusiasm.

"Guess I can fix it."

"Name your interest. Anything fair is yours!"

Webb paced slowly up and down while he considered. He needed money—needed it like ——!

With a frown the mining expert halted before Kenyon.

"I'd estimate the cost of that road at twenty-five thousand dollars. Rough guess, of course. We'll incorporate. I'll take stock to the amount I invest, plus the usual bonus. We'll fix up the papers when we get back. I see you got your stakes out."

He nodded to the location notices.

Kenyon suddenly bent over to fidget with his boot lace. A slow flush mounted to his tanned forehead. He looked up with a shamefaced grin.

"You know I—I haven't filed the claim yet," he confessed. "I meant to do it for a year, every time I hit Phœnix, but there was always something come up. But it's only a matter of a day or so. There hasn't been another white man in these parts for ten years."

Webb's frown deepened to a heavy scowl. He turned on his heel.

"A fool's play!" he grated. "Come on—let's get back."

They returned to camp and rolled up their packs. The heat of midday was upon them, a blistering torrent of flaming air from which there was no escape.

Webb was restless.

"When do we start back?" he demanded.

"About one o'clock," replied Kenyon, busy dividing the water equally in three canteens. "It'll be hotter than blazes,

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but we'll have to stand it. We haven't got as much water as I thought we had. 'Twon't more than last the twenty miles."

"Suppose the car isn't there?" asked Webb moodily.

Kenyon laughed.

"Why! How could it get away? What's the use of talking like kids?"

"How long could a man last out here without water—or a woman?" Webb's question had the tone of idle talk.

"Well," drawled Kenyon, "from Buck's Spring to Rexburg is fifty miles, across the Herqua Hala Desert. Couldn't make that without water!"

Bartholomew Webb's gaze shifted to the ground and became fixed. His eyes narrowed to thin, ugly slits; then they resumed their bored, cold expression.

He got to his feet abruptly and looked at his watch.

"Kenyon," he queried, "did you say a man could make it out the other way—to Cyanite?"

"Sure. It's northeast there—just opposite from the way we came in. The walking isn't good, but a man can make it. Only five miles farther than Buck's."

Webb stepped to the packs and took up his roll and canteen.

"If you'll point out the landmarks, I'd sooner hoof it out that way. I'm not crazy to cross that Hala Desert again."

"Why, sure," assented Kenyon.

He showed no surprize at the older man's decision. The dying horse was on the Buck's Spring trail. Webb might well wish to avoid the sight. He led the way to a ledge on one of the granite prongs. Webb listened to the instructions with impatience and said good-by. Over his shoulder he watched Kenyon climb down and rejoin his wife. He himself clambered slowly to the dry cañon bottom; then he set out, treading heavily northeastward.

In two hundred yards he rounded a slate-colored lava mass that hid him from the camp. Then Webb turned and began a detour. Half an hour later he was a mile below the camp, retracing his old trail to Buck's Spring. He had an hour to the good. Kenyon would start at one o'clock. And the northern cañon was longer.

He walked feverishly, desperately, his thoughts incessantly recurring to one dominant idea. When Kenyon and his wife reached Buck's Spring the car must be gone! And he, Bartholomew Webb, would file on the wonderful claim and return later—after two weeks or so. Kenyon and his wife? Well, this mythical God of theirs, this Spirit that hung over the desert, could take care of them!

He threw up his head and laughed boisterously. He was drunk with relief and the sense of new wealth. The laugh leaped back at him from the cañon walls. Again it came—and again. It diminished to a hollow coughing; it multiplied until the farther sand-dunes flung back a million jeering voices—*ha-ha—hha-hhaa!*

Bartholomew Webb shivered and increased his pace.

He glanced back often; occasionally, in a burst of impatience, he spurted for a hundred yards—slowing down afterward, panting and dry of throat. He could make the spring long before the sun went down. He must have covered half the distance already. But the sun seemed to sink toward the western horizon at an alarming rate.

Another hour of plodding. And another.

The heat was scorching, unendurable. Little by little, in his dreamy fatigue, Webb was beginning to feel conscious again of that sinister influence, that subtle, nameless something that lurked in the air and the sky and the sand. Why was it? There couldn't possible be any one near. It must be the monotony, the absolute stillness, the glaring emptiness of the vast, cursed land. Webb took off his light pack and hurled it savagely at a clump of stunted cactus, drained the last few drops from his canteen, threw it at the pack and plodded forward.

ONE mile now from Buck's Spring! There was his discarded saddle, just where he had dropped it.

A crackle of greasewood snapped from somewhere to the south. Webb looked up with a violent start, slipped with one foot, came down with the other on a round stone and crashed to the ground.

The pain of the wrenched ankle drove everything else from his mind. Writhing on the hot sand, he cut off the high-top boot and nursed the injured joint with both hands. Slowly the agony went down. He arose gingerly, grunting from the pain. Time was passing!

He looked up. Two black specks were crossing the crest of a low hill a mile and a half behind him.

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Webb gritted his teeth with a hard laugh. It was all in the game, of course; he'd play his hand to the last card. But he hadn't figured on their being so near when he stole the car that meant two lives!

Using only his sound foot, he began to hop. A hundred jumps—he felt his leg weakening. He stopped, panting, and eased himself down. He could never make it. He would wait and let Kenyon take him to the car. It would be easy to explain matters to Kenyon; he would tell him he had changed his mind about going to Cyanite—had wanted to get a line on the proposed roadway. As to the mine, that was gone, of course. Half a loaf would have to do.

The two black specks had disappeared. They ought to show again in a minute.

Ten minutes passed. Why didn't they come? His head was ringing, and it seemed an uncanny voice was speaking—Kenyon's voice of last night:

"If you'd 'a' seen the poor devil's eyes—We'll go back through the second cañon!

They were in the north cañon, behind that hot, brown ridge!

Again Webb struggled up. He put his injured foot to the ground, clenched his jaws, took ten steps by sheer will-power and fell groaning. A dogged anger flamed up within him. Who said the game was up? He'd take his medicine—no one had ever accused him of showing the white feather. He had faced death before, and he'd face it now, if need be, without a whimper. But there was still a chance.

The car was out of sight, a mile away. He must signal Kenyon in some way before Kenyon got too far. And he must be quick about it. He tried to shout and laughed grimly at the almost soundless escape of air that whistled from his parched throat. That ridge to the north—separating the two cañons! From the top of that ridge he could wave, could scream, could somehow attract attention. Two hundred yards—he'd make it!

Doggedly he climbed to his well foot. The crackle of breaking greasewood came once more from behind. He turned with a shudder. This —— country was getting on his nerves.

A hundred yards away, standing gaunt and droop-lipped, was his roan horse.

That miserable horse—he was still alive! The brute couldn't trot, perhaps, but he could walk. He'd carry his master to Buck's Spring!

Jumping, hobbling, crawling, Webb made the hundred yards. The horse whinnied softly as he approached. The roan hide was caked with dry dust and sweat. The eyes, swollen and drawn downward at the outer edges, strained painfully to follow the man's movements. Webb wound his hands in the scraggly mane and leaned exhausted against the horse's body.

"Good old boy!" he gulped.

With a tremendous effort he half-climbed, half-lifted himself to the roan's bare back. He caught the halter rope and jerked it frantically. A sudden thought struck him; he looked to the north. A little distance down, through a hitherto unseen cleft that apparently cut right into the second cañon, he saw, for an instant, Kenyon and his wife. They strode vigorously along.

Webb chuckled a bit unsteadily. Plenty of time—time to spare. It was too late to signal, but what need of signaling now? Wouldn't it take Kenyon fully twenty minutes to reach his car? Again he chuckled. Kenyon's wife had hit it right; the old roan was going to take a further part in the "affairs of men"—going to get one man out of a devilish tight fix.

The roan wheeled awkwardly at the sudden pull on the halter and faced down the cañon. The legs began to move, slowly, stiffly, with a pitch and a ludicrous outward swing.

Webb quivered with rage. He mouthed wild curses that came soundlessly from his purple lips. He took off his heavy belt and, using the buckle end, beat the horse over the head with insane fury.

The roan crept onward, did not even flinch under the blows. Steadily, willingly, but with incredible slowness, he dragged himself forward with the same horrible mockery of a horse's walk.

Bartholomew Webb suddenly ceased his frenzy, dropped the halter rope and clutched the mane with trembling fingers. Into his distended eyes came a look of wonder and a terror that was something more than the fear of death. With a convulsive movement he covered his eyes.

Sharp on the clear desert air came the staccato beat of a motor. It swelled loudly for an instant; then it steadied and grew rapidly fainter.

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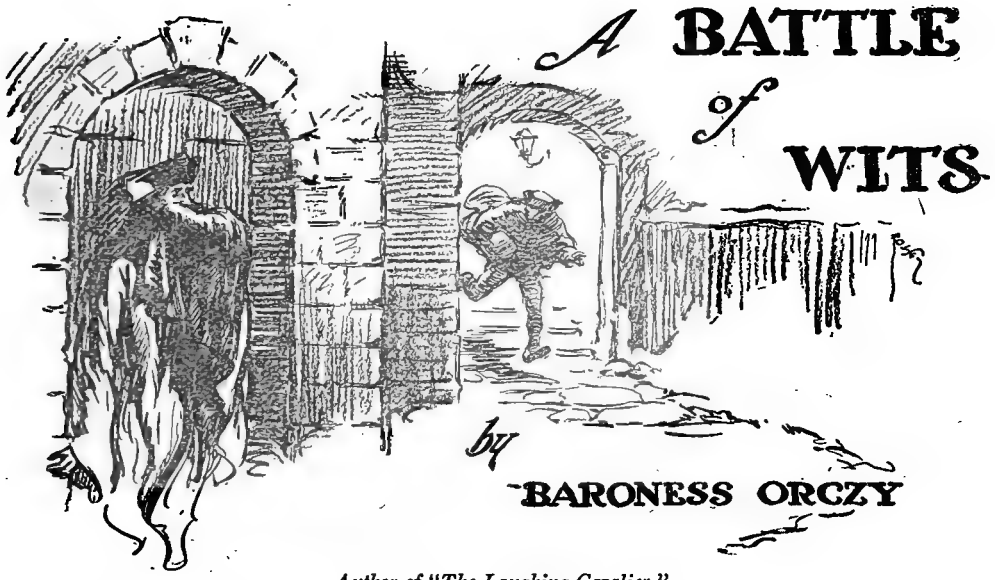

A BATTLE of WITS

by BARONESS ORCZY

Author of "The Laughing Cavalier."

WHAT had happened was this: Tournefort, one of the ablest of the many sleuth-hounds employed by the Committee of Public Safety, was out during that awful storm on the night of the twentieth. The rain came down as if it had been poured out of buckets, and Tournefort took shelter under the portico of a tall, dilapidated-looking house somewhere at the back of St. Lazare. The night was, of course, pitch-dark, and the howling of the wind and beating of the rain effectually drowned every other sound.

Tournefort, chilled to the marrow, had at first cowered in the angle of the door as far away from the draft as he could. But presently he spied the glimmer of a tiny light some little way up on his left, and, taking this to come from the lodge of the *concierge*, he went cautiously along the passage, intending to ask for better shelter against the fury of the elements than the rickety front door afforded.

Tournefort, you must remember, was always on the best of terms with every *concierge* in Paris. They were, as it were, his subordinates: without their help he never could have carried on his unavowable profession quite so successfully. And they, in their turn, found it to their advantage to earn the good-will of that army of spies which the Revolutionary Government kept in its service for the tracking down of all those unfortunates who had not given complete adhesion to their tyrannical and murderous policy.

Therefore, in this instance Tournefort felt no hesitation in claiming the hospitality of the *concierge* of the squalid house wherein he found himself. He went boldly up to the lodge. His hand was already on the latch when certain sounds which proceeded from the interior of the lodge caused him to pause and to bend his ear in order to listen. It was Tournefort's *métier* to listen. What had arrested his attention was the sound of a man's voice, saying in a tone of deep respect—

"*Bien, Madame la Comtesse*, we'll do our best."

No wonder that the servant of the Committee of Public Safety remained at attention, no longer thought of the storm or felt the cold blast chilling him to the marrow. Here was a wholly unexpected piece of good luck. "*Madame la Comtesse!*" *Pestel* There were not many *Madame la Comtesses* left in Paris these days.

Unfortunately the wind and the rain made such a din that it was difficult to catch every sound which came from the interior of the lodge. All that Tournefort caught definitely were a few fragments of conversation.

"My good M. Bertin," came at one time from a woman's voice, "truly I do not know why you should do all this for me."

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And then again:

"All I possess in the world now are my diamonds. They alone stand between my children and utter destitution."

The man's voice seemed all the time to be saying something that sounded cheerful and encouraging. But his voice came only as a vague murmur to the listener's ears. Presently, however, there came a word which set his pulses tingling. Madame said something about "Gentilly," and directly afterward:

"You will have to be very careful, my dear M. Bertin. The château, I feel sure, is being watched."

Tournefort could scarce repress a cry of joy.

"Gentilly? *Madame la Comtesse?* The château?" Why, of course, he held all the necessary threads already. The former Comte de Sucy—a pestilential aristo, if ever there was one—had been sent to the guillotine less than a fortnight ago. His château, situated just outside Gentilly, stood empty, it having been given out that the Widow Sucy and her two children had escaped to England.

Well, she had not gone, apparently, for here she was in the lodge of the *concierge* of a mean house in one of the desolate quarters of Paris, begging some traitor to find her diamonds for her, which she had obviously left concealed inside the château. What a haul for Tournefort! What commendation from his superiors! The chances of a speedy promotion were indeed glorious now.

He blessed the storm and the rain which had driven him for shelter to this house, where a poisonous plot was being hatched to rob the people of valuable property and to aid a few more of those abominable aristos in cheating the guillotine of their traitorous heads.

He listened for a while longer, in order to get all the information that he could on the subject of the diamonds, because he knew by experience that those perfidious aristos, once they were under arrest, would sooner bite out their tongues than reveal anything that might be of service to the Government of the people.

But he learned little else. Nothing was revealed of where *Madame la Comtesse* was in hiding or how the diamonds were to be disposed of once they were found. Tournefort would have given much to have at least one of his colleagues with him. As it was, he would be forced to act single-handed and on his own initiative.

In his own mind he had already decided that he would wait until *Madame la Comtesse* came out of the *concierge's* lodge and that he would follow her and apprehend her somewhere out in the open streets, rather than here where her friend Bertin might prove to be a stalwart as well as a desperate man, ready with a pistol, whilst he—Tournefort—was unarmed.

Bertin, who had, it seemed, been entrusted with the task of finding the diamonds, could then be shadowed and arrested in the very act of filching property which by decree of the state belonged to the people.

So he waited patiently for a while. No doubt the aristo would remain here under shelter until the storm had abated. Soon the sound of voices died down, and an extraordinary silence descended on this miserable, abandoned corner of old Paris. The silence became all the more marked after a while, because the rain ceased its monotonous pattering and the soughing of the wind was stilled.

It was, in fact, this amazing stillness which set Citizen Tournefort thinking. Evidently the aristo did not intend to come out of the lodge tonight. Well! Tournefort had not meant to make himself unpleasant inside the house or to have a quarrel just yet with the traitor Bertin, whoever he was; but his hand was forced, and he had no option.

THE door of the lodge was locked. He tugged vigorously at the bell again and again, for at first he got no answer. A few minutes later he heard the sound of shuffling footsteps upon creaking boards. The door was opened and a man in night attire, with bare, thin legs and tattered carpet slippers on his feet, confronted an exceedingly astonished servant of the Committee of Public Safety.

Indeed, Tournefort thought that he must have been dreaming or that he was dreaming now. For the man who opened the door to him was well-known to every agent of the Committee. He was an ex-soldier, who had been crippled years ago by the loss of one arm and had held the post of *concierge* in a house in the Ruelle du Paradis ever since. His name was Grosjean.

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He was very old and nearly doubled up with rheumatism, had scarcely any hair on his head or flesh on his bones.

At this moment he appeared to be suffering from a cold in the head, for his eyes were streaming and his narrow, hooked nose was adorned by a drop of moisture at its tip. In fact, poor old Grosjean looked more like a dilapidated scarecrow than a dangerous conspirator. Tournefort literally gasped at sight of him, and Grosjean uttered a kind of croak, intended, no doubt, for complete surprize.

"Citizen Tournefort!" he exclaimed. "Name of a dog! What are you doing here at this hour and in this abominable weather? Come in! Come in!" he added, and, turning on his heel, he shuffled back into the inner room and then returned, carrying a lighted lamp, which he set upon the table. "Amélie left a cup of hot coffee on the hob in the kitchen before she went to bed. You must have a drop of that."

He was about to shuffle off again when Tournefort broke in roughly:

"None of that nonsense, Grosjean! Where are the aristos?"

"The aristos, citizen?" queried Grosjean, and nothing could have looked more utterly, more ludicrously bewildered than did the old *concierge* at this moment. "What aristos?"

"Bertin and *Madame la Comtesse*," retorted Tournefort gruffly. "I heard them talking."

"You have been dreaming, Citizen Tournefort," the old man said with a husky little laugh. "Sit down and let me get you some coffee——"

"Don't try to hoodwink me, Grosjean!" Tournefort cried now in a sudden access of rage. "I tell you that I saw the light. I heard the aristos talking. There was a man Bertin, and a woman whom he called '*Madame la Comtesse*,' and I say that some devilish royalist plot is being hatched here, and that you, Grosjean, will suffer for it if you try to shield those aristos."

"But, Citizen Tournefort," replied the *concierge* meekly, "I assure you that I have seen no aristos. The door of my bedroom was open and the lamp was by my bedside. Amélie too has only been in bed a few minutes. You ask her! There has been no one, I tell you, no one! I should have seen and heard them—the door was open," he reiterated pathetically.

"We'll soon see about that!" was Tournefort's curt comment.

But it was his turn indeed to be utterly bewildered. He searched—none too gently—the squalid little lodge through and through, turned the paltry sticks of furniture over, hauled little Amélie, Grosjean's granddaughter, out of bed, searched under the mattresses and even poked his head up the chimney.

Grosjean watched him wholly unperturbed. These were strange times, and friend Tournefort had obviously gone a little off his head. The worthy old *concierge* calmly went on getting the coffee ready. Only when presently Tournefort, worn out with anger and futile exertion, threw himself with many an oath into the one armchair, Grosjean remarked coolly:

"I tell you what I think it is, citizen. If you were standing just by the door of the lodge, you had the back staircase of the house immediately behind you. The partition wall is very thin, and there is a condemned door just there also. No doubt the voices came from there. You see, if there had been any aristos here," he added naively, "they could not have flown up the chimney, could they?"

That argument was certainly unanswerable. But Tournefort was out of temper. He roughly ordered Grosjean to bring the lamp and show him the back staircase and the disused door. The *concierge* obeyed without a murmur. He was not in the least disturbed or frightened by all this blustering. He was only afraid that getting out of bed had made his cold worse.

But he knew Tournefort of old. A good fellow but inclined to be noisy and arrogant since he was in the employ of the Government. Grosjean took the precaution of putting on his trousers and wrapping an old shawl round his shoulders. Then he had a final sip of hot coffee; after which he picked up the lamp and guided Tournefort out of the lodge.

The wind had quite gone down by now. The lamp scarcely flickered as Grosjean held it above his head.

"Just here, Citizen Tournefort," he said and turned sharply to his left.

But the next sound which he uttered was a loud croak of astonishment.

"That door has been out of use ever since I've been here," he muttered.

"And it certainly was closed when I stood

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up against it," rejoined Tournefort with a savage oath, "or, of course, I should have noticed it."

Close to the lodge, at right-angles to it, a door stood partially open. Tournefort went through it, closely followed by Grosjean. He found himself in a passage which ended in a cul-de-sac on his right; on the left was the foot of the stairs. The whole place was pitch-dark save for the feeble light of the lamp. The cul-de-sac itself reeked of dirt and fustiness as if it had not been cleaned or ventilated for years.

"When did you last notice that this door was closed?" queried Tournefort, furious with the sense of discomfiture, which he would have liked to vent on the unfortunate *concierge*.

"I have not noticed it for some days, citizen," replied Grosjean meekly. "I have had a severe cold and have not been outside my lodge since Monday last. But we'll ask Amélie!" he added more hopefully.

Amélie, however, could throw no light upon the subject. She certainly kept the back stairs cleaned and swept, but it was not part of her duties to extend her sweeping operations as far as the cul-de-sac. She had quite enough to do as it was, with grandfather now practically helpless. This morning, when she went out to do her shopping, she had not noticed whether the disused door did or did not look the same as usual.

Grosjean was very sorry for his friend Tournefort, who appeared vastly upset, but still more sorry for himself, for he knew what endless trouble this would entail upon him.

Nor was the trouble slow in coming, not only on Grosjean but on every lodger inside the house. For, before half an hour had gone by, Tournefort had gone and come back, this time with the local commissary of police and a couple of agents, who had every man, woman and child in that house out of bed and examined at great length, their antecedents and identity books overhauled, their rooms turned topsy-turvy and their furniture knocked about.

It was past midnight before all these perquisitions were completed. No one dared to complain at these indignities put upon peaceable citizens on the mere denunciation of an obscure police agent. These were times when every regulation, every command, had to be accepted without a murmur. At one o'clock in the morning Grosjean himself was thankful to get back to bed, having satisfied the commissary that he was not a dangerous conspirator.

But of any one even remotely approaching the description of the former Comtesse de Sucy, or of any man called Bertin, there was not the faintest trace.

II

BUT no feeling of discomfiture ever lasted very long with Citizen Tournefort. He was a person of vast resource and great buoyancy of temperament.

True, he had not apprehended two exceedingly noxious aristos as he had hoped to do; but he held the threads of an abominable conspiracy in his hands, and the question of catching both Bertin and *Madame la Comtesse* red-handed was only a question of time. But little time had been lost. There was always some one to be found at the offices of the Committee of Public Safety, which were open all night. It was possible that Citizen Chauvelin would be still there, for he often took on the night shift, or else Citizen Gourdon.

It was Gourdon who greeted his subordinate somewhat ill-humoredly, for he was indulging in a little sleep with his toes turned to the fire as the night was so damp and cold. But when he heard Tournefort's story, he was all eagerness and zeal.

"It is, of course, too late to do anything now," he said finally, after he had mastered every detail of the man's adventures in the Ruelle du Paradis; "but get half a dozen men together that you can rely on, and by six o'clock in the morning, or even five, we'll be on our way to Gentilly. Citizen Chauvelin was only saying today that he strongly suspected the former Comtesse de Sucy of having left the bulk of her valuable jewelry at the château, and that she would make some effort to gain possession of it.

"It would be rather fine, Citizen Tournefort," he added with a chuckle, "if you and I could steal a march on Citizen Chauvelin over this affair, what? He has been extraordinarily arrogant of late and marvelously in favor, not only with the Committee but with Citizen Robespierre himself."

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"They say," commented Tournefort, "that he succeeded in getting hold of some papers which were of great value to the members of the Committee."

"He never succeeded in getting hold of that meddlesome Englishman whom they call the Scarlet Pimpernel," was Gourdon's final dry comment.

Thus was the matter decided on. And the following morning at daybreak Gourdon, who was only a subordinate officer on the Committee of Public Safety, took it upon himself to institute a perquisition in the château of Gentilly, which is situated close to the commune of that name. He was accompanied by his friend Tournefort and a gang of half a dozen ruffians recruited from the most disreputable cabarets of Paris.

The intention had been to steal a march on Citizen Chauvelin, who had been over-arrogant of late; but the result did not come up to expectations. By midday the château had been ransacked from attic to cellar; every kind of valuable property had been destroyed, priceless works of art irretrievably damaged. But priceless works of art had no market in Paris these days, whilst the property of real value—the Sucy diamonds namely—which had excited the cupidity or the patriotic wrath of Citizens Gourdon and Tournefort, could nowhere be found.

To make the situation more deplorable still, the Committee of Public Safety had in some unexplainable way got wind of the affair, and the two worthies had the mortification of presently seeing Citizen Chauvelin appearing upon the scene.

It was then two o'clock in the afternoon. Gourdon, after he had snatched a hasty dinner at a neighboring cabaret, had returned to the task of pulling the château of Gentilly about his own ears if need be with a view to finding the concealed treasure.

For the nonce he was standing in the center of the finely proportioned hall. The rich ormolu and crystal chandelier lay in a tangled, broken heap of scraps at his feet, and all around there was a confused medley of pictures, statuettes, silver ornaments, tapestry and brocade hangings, all piled up in disorder, smashed, tattered, kicked at now and again by Gourdon to the accompaniment of a savage oath.

The house itself was full of noises: heavy footsteps tramping up and down the stairs, furniture turned over, curtains torn from their poles, doors and windows battered in. And through it all the ceaseless hammering of pick and ax, attacking these stately walls which had withstood the wars and sieges of centuries.

Every now and then, Tournefort, his face perspiring and crimson with exertion, would present himself at the door of the hall. Gourdon would query gruffly—

"Well?"

And the answer was invariably the same—

"Nothing!"

Then Gourdon would swear again and send out orders to continue the search, relentlessly, ceaselessly.

"Leave no stone upon stone," he commanded. "Those diamonds must be found. We know they are here, and, name of a dog, I mean to have them!"

When Chauvelin arrived at the château, he made no attempt at first to interfere with Gourdon's commands. Only on one occasion he remarked curtly—

"I suppose, Citizen Gourdon, that you can trust your search-party?"

"Absolutely," retorted Gourdon. "A finer patriot than Tournefort does not exist."

"Probably," rejoined the other dryly. "But what about the men?"

"Oh, they are only a set of barefooted, ignorant louts. They do as they are told, and Tournefort has his eye on them. I dare say they'll contrive to steal a few things, but they would never dare lay hands on valuable jewelry. To begin with, they could never dispose of it. Imagine a *va-nu-pieds* peddling a diamond tiara!"

"There are always receivers prepared to take risks."

"Very few," retorted Gourdon, "since we decreed that trafficking in aristo property was a crime punishable by death."

Chauvelin said nothing for the moment. He appeared wrapped in his own thoughts, listened for a while to the confused hubbub about the house; then he resumed abruptly—

"Who are these men whom you are employing, Citizen Gourdon?"

"A well-known gang," replied the other. "I can give you their names."

"If you please."

Gourdon searched his pockets for a paper

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which he found presently and handed to his colleague. The latter perused it thoughtfully.

"Where did Tournefort find these men?" he asked.

"For the most part at the Cabaret de la Liberté—a place of very evil repute down in the Rue Christine."

"I know it," rejoined the other. He was still studying the list of names which Gourdon had given him. "And," he added, "I know most of these men. As thorough a set of ruffians as we need for some of our work. Merri, Guidal, Rateau, Desmonds. Tiens!" he exclaimed. "Rateau! Is Rateau here now?"

"Why, of course! He was recruited, like the rest of them, for the day. He won't leave till he has been paid, you may be sure of that. Why do you ask?"

"I will tell you presently. But I would wish to speak with Citizen Rateau first."

Just at the moment Tournefort paid his periodical visit to the hall. The usual words, "Still nothing," were on his lips when Gourdon curtly ordered him to go and fetch the Citizen Rateau.

A minute or two later Tournefort returned with the news that Rateau could nowhere be found. Chauvelin received the news without any comment; he only ordered Tournefort somewhat roughly back to his work. Then, as soon as the latter had gone, Gourdon turned upon his colleague.

"Will you explain—" he began with a show of bluster.

"With pleasure," replied Chauvelin blandly. "On my way hither less than an hour ago I met your man Rateau, about four kilometers from here."

"You met Rateau!" exclaimed Gourdon impatiently. "Impossible! He was here then, I feel sure. You must have been mistaken."

"I think not. I have only seen the man once, when I too went to recruit a band of ruffians at the Cabaret de la Liberté, in connection with some work I wanted doing. I did not employ him then, for he appeared to me both drink-sodden and nothing but a miserable, consumptive creature, with a churchyard cough you can hear a kilometer away. But I would know him anywhere. Besides which, he stopped and wished me good morning. Now I come to think of it," added Chauvelin thoughtfully, "he was carrying what looked like a heavy bundle under his arm."

"A heavy bundle!" cried Gourdon with a forceful oath. "And you did not stop him!"

"I had no reason for suspecting him. I did not know until I arrived here what the whole affair was about or whom you were employing. All that the Committee knew for certain was that you and Tournefort and a number of men had arrived at Gentilly before daybreak, and I was then instructed to follow you hither to see what mischief you were up to. You acted in complete secrecy, remember, Citizen Gourdon, and without first ascertaining the wishes of the Committee of Public Safety, whose servant you are. If the Sucy diamonds are not found, you alone will be held responsible for their loss to the Government of the people."

Chauvelin's voice had now assumed a threatening tone, and Gourdon felt all his audacity and self-assurance fall away from him, leaving him a prey to nameless terror.

"We must round up Rateau," he murmured hastily. "He can not have gone far."

"No, he can not," rejoined Chauvelin dryly. "Though I was not specially thinking of Rateau or of diamonds when I started to come hither, I did send a general order forbidding any person on foot or horseback to enter or leave Paris by any of the southern gates. That order will serve us well now. Are you riding?"

"Yes. I left my horse at the tavern just outside Gentilly. I can get to horse within ten minutes."

"To horse, then, as quickly as you can. Pay off your men and dismiss them—all but Tournefort, who had best accompany us. Do not lose a single moment. I'll be ahead of you and may have come up with Rateau before you overtake me. And, if I were you, Citizen Gourdon," he concluded with ominous emphasis, "I would burn one or two candles to your compeer the devil. You'll have need of his help if Rateau gives us the slip."

III

THE first part of the road from Gentilly to Paris runs through the valley of the Bière and is densely wooded on either side. It winds in and out for the most part, ribbon-like, through

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thick coppice of chestnut and birch. Thus it was impossible for Chauvelin to spy his quarry from afar; nor did he expect to do so this side of the Hôpital de la Santé. Once past that point, he would find the road quite open and running almost straight, in the midst of arid and only partially cultivated land.

He rode at a sharp trot, with his caped coat wrapped tightly round his shoulders, for it was raining fast. At intervals, when he met an occasional wayfarer, he would ask questions about a tall man who had a consumptive cough and who was carrying a cumbersome burden under his arm.

Almost every one whom he thus asked remembered seeing a personage who vaguely answered to the description: tall and with a decided stoop—yes, and carrying a cumbersome-looking bundle under his arm. Chauvelin was undoubtedly on the track of the thief.

Just beyond Meuves he was overtaken by Gourdon and Tournefort. Here too the man Rateau's track became more and more certain. At one place he had stopped and had a glass of wine and a rest; at another he had asked how close he was to the gates of Paris.

The road now was quite open and level; the irregular buildings of the hospital appeared vague in the rain-sodden distance.

Twenty minutes later Tournefort, who was riding ahead of his companions, spied a tall, stooping figure at the spot where the Chemin de Gentilly forks and where stands a group of isolated houses and bits of garden, which belong to la Santé. Here, before the days when the glorious revolution swept aside all such outward signs of superstition, there had stood a Calvary. It was now used as a sign-post. The man stood before it, scanning the half-obliterated indications.

At the moment that Tournefort first caught sight of him, he appeared uncertain of his way. Then for a while he watched Tournefort, who was coming at a sharp trot toward him. Finally he seemed to make up his mind very suddenly and, giving a last, quick look around, he walked rapidly along the upper road. Tournefort drew rein, waited for his colleagues to come up with him. Then he told them what he had seen.

"It is Rateau, sure enough," he said. "I saw his face quite distinctly and heard his abominable cough. He is trying to get into Paris. That road leads nowhere but to the barrier. There, of course, he will be stopped, and——"

The other two had also brought their horses to a halt. The situation had become tense, and a plan for future action had at once to be decided on. Already Chauvelin, masterful and sure of himself, had assumed command of the little party. Now he broke in abruptly on Tournefort's vapid reflections.

"We don't want him stopped at the barrier," he said in his usual curt, authoritative manner. "You, Citizen Tournefort," he continued, "will ride as fast as you can to the gate, making a detour by the lower road. You will immediately demand to speak with the sergeant who is in command, and you will give him a detailed description of the man Rateau. Then you will tell him in my name that, should such a man present himself at the gate, he must be allowed to enter the city unmolested."

Gourdon gave a quick cry of protest.

"Let the man go unmolested? Citizen Chauvelin, think what you are doing!"

"I always think of what I am doing," retorted Chauvelin curtly, "and have no need of outside guidance in the process." Then he turned once more to Tournefort. "You yourself, citizen," he continued, in sharp, decisive tones which admitted of no argument, "will dismount as soon as you are inside the city. You will keep the gate under observation. The moment you see the man Rateau, you will shadow him, and on no account lose sight of him. Understand?"

"You may trust me, Citizen Chauvelin," Tournefort replied, elated at the prospect of work which was so entirely congenial to him. "But will you tell me——"

"I will tell you this much, Citizen Tournefort," broke in Chauvelin with some acerbity; "that, though we have traced the diamonds and the thief so far, we have, through your folly last night, lost complete track of the former Comtesse de Sucy and of the man Bertin. We want Rateau to show us where they are."

"I understand," murmured the other meekly.

"That's a mercy!" commented Chauvelin dryly. "Then quickly, man. Lose no time! Try to get a few minutes advance on Rateau; then slip into the guard-room to change into less conspicuous clothes.

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Citizen Gourdon and I will continue on the upper road and keep the man in sight in case he should think of altering his course. In any event, we'll meet you just inside the barrier. But, if in the meanwhile you have to get on Rateau's track before we have arrived on the scene, leave the usual indications as to the direction which you have taken."

Having given his orders and satisfied himself that they were fully understood, he gave a curt demand, "*En avant*," and once more the three of them rode at a sharp trot down the road toward the city.

IV

CITIZEN RATEAU, if he thought about the matter at all, must indeed have been vastly surprized at the unwonted amiability or indifference of Sergeant Ribot, who was in command at the gate of Gentilly. Ribot only threw a very perfunctory glance at the greasy permit which Rateau presented to him. And when he put the usual query, "What's in that parcel?" Rateau gave the reply, "Two heads of cabbage and a bunch of carrots." Ribot merely poked one of his fingers into the bundle, felt that a cabbage leaf did effectually lie on the top and thereupon gave the formal order, "Pass on, citizen, in the name of the Republic!" without any hesitation.

Tournefort, who had watched the brief little incident from behind the window of a neighboring cabaret, could not help but chuckle to himself. Never had he seen game walk more readily into a trap.

Rateau, after he had passed the barrier, appeared undecided which way he would go. He looked with obvious longing toward the cabaret, behind which the keenest agent on the staff of the Committee of Public Safety was even now ensconced. But seemingly a halt within those hospitable doors did not form part of his program, and a moment or two later he turned sharply on his heel and strode rapidly down the rue de l'Oursine.

Tournefort allowed him a fair start, then made ready to follow.

Just as he was stepping out of the cabaret, he spied Chauvelin and Gourdon coming through the gates. They, too, had apparently made a brief halt inside the guard-room, where—as at most of the gates—a store of various disguises was always kept ready for the use of the numerous sleuth-hounds employed by the Committee of Public Safety.

Here the two men had exchanged their official garments for suits of somber cloth, which gave them the appearance of a couple of humble *bourgeois* going quietly about their business. Tournefort had donned an old blouse, tattered stockings and shoes down at heel. With his hands buried in his breeches pockets, he, too, turned into the long narrow rue de l'Oursine, which after a sharp curve abuts on the rue Mouffetard.

Rateau was walking rapidly, taking big strides with his long legs. Tournefort, now sauntering in the gutter in the middle of the road, now darting in and out of open doorways, kept his quarry well in sight. Chauvelin and Gourdon lagged some little way behind. It was still raining, but not heavily, a thin drizzle, which penetrated almost to the marrow. Not many passers-by haunted this forlorn quarter of old Paris. To right and left, tall houses almost obscured the last, quickly-fading light of the gray September day.

At the bottom of the rue Mouffetard, Rateau came once more to a halt. A network of narrow streets radiated from this center. He looked all round him and also behind. It was difficult to know whether he had a sudden suspicion that he was being followed: certain it is that, after a very brief moment of hesitation, he plunged suddenly into the narrow rue Contrescarpe and disappeared from view.

Tournefort was after him in a trice. When he reached the corner of the street he saw Rateau, at the farther end of it, take a sudden sharp turn to the right. But not before he had very obviously spied his pursuer, for at that moment his entire demeanor changed. An air of furtive anxiety was expressed in his whole attitude. Even at that distance, Tournefort could see him clutching his bulky parcel close to his chest.

After that, the pursuit became closer and hotter. Rateau was in and out of that tight network of streets which cluster around the Place de Fourci, intent apparently on throwing his pursuers off the scent, for after a while he was running round and round in a circle. Now up the rue des Poules; then to the right and to the

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right again; back in the Place de Fourci. Then straight across it once more to the rue Contrescarpe, where he presently disappeared so completely from view that Tournefort thought that the earth must have swallowed him up.

Tournefort was a man capable of great physical exertion. His calling often made heavy demands upon his powers of endurance; but never before had he grappled with so strenuous a task. Puffing and panting, now running at top-speed, anon brought to a halt by the doubling-up tactics of his quarry, his great difficulty was the fact that Citizen Chauvelin did not wish the man Rateau to be apprehended, did not wish him to know that he was being pursued.

And Tournefort had need of all his wits to keep well under the shadow of any projecting wall or under cover of open doorways which were conveniently in the way, and all the while not to lose sight of that consumptive giant, who seemed to be playing some intricate game which well-nigh exhausted the strength of Citizen Tournefort.

What he could not make out was what had happened to Chauvelin and to Gourdon. They had been less than three hundred meters behind him when first this wild chase in and out of the rue Contrescarpe had begun. Now, when their presence was most needed, they seemed to have lost track both of him—Tournefort—and of the very elusive quarry. To make matters more complicated, the shades of evening were drawing in very fast, and these narrow streets of the Faubourg were very sparsely lighted.

Just at that moment Tournefort had once more caught sight of Rateau, striding leisurely this time up the street. The worthy agent quickly took refuge under a doorway and was mopping his streaming forehead, glad of this brief respite in the mad chase, when that awful churchyard cough suddenly sounded so close to him that he gave a great jump and well-nigh betrayed his presence then and there. He had only just time to withdraw further still into the angle of the doorway when Rateau passed by.

Tournefort peeped out of his hiding-place and for the space of a dozen heart-beats or so remained there quite still, watching that broad back and those long limbs slowly moving through the gathering gloom. The next moment he perceived Chauvelin standing at the end of the street.

Rateau saw him, too—came face to face with him, in fact, and must have known who he was, for, without an instant's hesitation and just like a hunted creature at bay, he turned sharply on his heel and then ran back down the street as hard as he could tear.

He passed close to within half a meter of Tournefort; and, as he flew past, he hit out with his left fist so vigorously that the worthy agent of the Committee of Public Safety, caught on the nose by the blow, staggered and measured his length upon the flagged floor below.

The next moment Chauvelin had come by. Tournefort, struggling to his feet, called to him, panting:

"Did you see him? Which way did he go?"

"Up the rue Bordet. After him, citizen!" replied Chauvelin grimly, between his teeth.

Together the two men continued the chase, guided through the intricate mazes of the streets by their fleeing quarry. They had Rateau well in sight, and the latter could no longer continue his former tactics with success, now that two experienced sleuth-hounds were on his track.

At a given moment he was caught between the two of them. Tournefort was advancing cautiously up the rue Bordet, Chauvelin equally stealthily was coming down the same street, and Rateau once more walking quite leisurely, was at equal distance between the two.

V

THERE are no side turnings out of the rue Bordet, the total length of which is less than fifty meters; so Tournefort, feeling more at his ease, ensconced himself behind a doorway at one end of the street, while Chauvelin did the same at the other. Rateau, standing in the gutter, appeared once more in a state of hesitation. Immediately in front of him the door of a small cabaret stood invitingly open; its sign-board, Le Bon Copain, promised rest and refreshment. He peered up and down the road, satisfied himself presumably that for the moment

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his pursuers were out of sight, hugged his parcel to his chest and then suddenly made a dart for the cabaret and disappeared within its doors.

Nothing could have been better. The quarry for the moment was safe, and, if the sleuth-hounds could not get refreshment, they could at least get a rest. Tournefort and Chauvelin crept out of their hiding-places. They met in the middle of the road, at the spot where Rateau had stood a while ago. It was then growing very dark, and the street was innocent of lanterns. But the lights inside the cabaret gave a full view of the interior. The lower half of the wide shop-window was curtained off, but above the curtain the heads of the customers of Le Bon Copain and the general comings and goings could very clearly be seen.

Tournefort, never at a loss, had already climbed upon a low projection in the wall of one of the houses opposite. From this point of vantage he could more easily observe what went on inside the cabaret; and in short, jerky sentences he gave a description of what he saw to his chief.

"Rateau is sitting down. He has his back to the window. He has put his bundle down close beside him on the bench. He can't speak for a minute, for he is coughing and spluttering like an old walrus. A wench is bringing him a bottle of wine and a hunk of bread and cheese. He has started talking—is talking volubly. The people are laughing—some are applauding. And here comes Jean Victor, the landlord—you know him, citizen—a big, hulking fellow and as good a patriot as I ever wish to see. He, too, is laughing and talking to Rateau, who is doubled up with another fit of coughing."

Chauvelin uttered an exclamation of impatience.

"Enough of this, Citizen Tournefort. Keep your eye on the man and hold your tongue. I am spent with fatigue."

"No wonder," murmured Tournefort. Then he added insinuatingly, "Why not let me go in there and apprehend Rateau now? We should have the diamonds and——"

"And lose the former Comtesse de Sucy and the man Bertin," retorted Chauvelin with sudden fierceness. "Bertin, who can be none other than that cursed Englishman, the——"

He checked himself, seeing that Tournefort was gazing down on him with awe and bewilderment expressed in his lean, hatchet face.

"You are losing sight of Rateau, citizen," continued Chauvelin calmly. "What is he doing now?"

But Tournefort felt that this calmness was only on the surface; something strange had stirred the depths of his chief's keen, masterful mind. He would have liked to ask a question or two, but he knew from experience that it was neither wise nor profitable to try to probe Citizen Chauvelin's thoughts. So after a moment or two he turned back obediently to his task.

"I can't see Rateau for the moment," he said. "But there is much talking and merriment in there. Ah! There he is, I think. Yes, I see him! He is behind the counter, talking to Jean Victor, and he has just thrown some money down upon the counter—gold, too! Name of a dog——"

Then suddenly, without any warning, Tournefort jumped down from his post of observation. Chauvelin uttered a brief—

"What the —— are you doing, citizen?"

"Rateau is going," replied Tournefort excitedly. "He drank a mug of wine at a draft and has picked up his bundle, ready to go."

Once more cowering in the dark angle of a doorway, the two men waited, their nerves on edge, for the reappearance of their quarry.

"I wish Citizen Gourdon were here," whispered Tournefort. "In the darkness it is better to be three than two."

"I sent him back to the Station in the rue Mouffetard," was Chauvelin's curt retort; "there to give notice that I might require a few armed men presently. But he should be somewhere about here by now, looking for us. Anyway, I have my whistle, and if——"

He said no more, for at that moment the door of the cabaret was opened from within and Rateau stepped out into the street, to the accompaniment of loud laughter and clapping of hands which came from the customers of the Bon Copain.

This time he appeared neither in a hurry nor yet anxious. He did not pause in order to glance to right or left, but started to walk quite leisurely up the street. The two sleuth-hounds quietly followed him.

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Through the darkness they could only vaguely see his silhouette with the great bundle under his arm.

Whatever may have been Rateau's fears of being shadowed a while ago, he certainly seemed free of them now. He sauntered along, whistling a tune, down the Montagne Ste. Geneviève to the Place Maubert, and thence straight toward the river.

Having reached the bank, he turned off to his left, sauntered past the Ecole de Médecine and went across the Petit Pont, then through the New Market, along the Quai des Orfèvres. Here he made a halt, and for a while looked over the embankment at the river and then round about him as if in search of something. But presently he appeared to make up his mind and continued his leisurely walk as far as the Pont Neuf, where he turned sharply off to his right, still whistling, Tournefort and Chauvelin hard upon his heels.

"That whistling is getting on my nerves," muttered Tournefort irritably. "And I haven't heard the ruffian's churchyard cough since he walked out of the Bon Copain."

Strangely enough, it was this remark of Tournefort's which gave Chauvelin the first inkling of something strange and, to him, positively awesome. Tournefort, who walked close beside him, heard him suddenly mutter a fierce exclamation.

"Name of a dog!"

"What is it, citizen?" queried Tournefort, awed by this sudden outburst on the part of a man whose icy calmness had become proverbial throughout the Committee.

"Sound the alarm, citizen!" cried Chauvelin in response. "Or, by Satan, he'll escape us again!"

"But—" stammered Tournefort in utter bewilderment, while, with fingers that trembled somewhat, he fumbled for his whistle.

"We shall want all the help we can get," retorted Chauvelin roughly. "For, unless I am much mistaken, there's more noble quarry here than even I could dare to hope!"

Rateau in the meanwhile had quietly lolled up to the parapet on the right hand side of the bridge, and Tournefort, who was watching him with intense keenness, still marveled why Citizen Chauvelin had suddenly become so strangely excited.

Rateau was merely lolling against the parapet like a man who has not a care in the world. He had placed his bundle on the stone ledge beside him. Here he waited a moment or two, until one of the small craft upon the river loomed out of the darkness immediately below the bridge. Then he picked up the bundle and threw it straight into the boat. At that same moment Tournefort had the whistle to his lips. A shrill, sharp sound rang out through the gloom.

"The boat, Citizen Tournefort, the boat!" cried Chauvelin. "There are plenty of us here to deal with the man."

Immediately, from the quays, the streets, the bridges, dark figures emerged out of the darkness and hurried to the spot. Some reached the bridgehead even as Rateau made a dart forward, and two men were upon him before he succeeded in running very far. Others had scrambled down the embankment and were shouting to some unseen boatman to "Halt, in the name of the people!"

But Rateau gave in without a struggle. He appeared more dazed than frightened, and quietly allowed the agents of the Committee to lead him back to the bridge where Chauvelin had paused, waiting for him.

VI

A MINUTE or two later Tournefort was once more beside his chief. He was carrying the precious bundle, which, he explained, the boatman had given up without question.

"The man knew nothing about it," the agent said. "No one, he says, could have been more surprized than he was when this bundle was suddenly flung at him over the parapet of the bridge."

Just then the small group composed of two or three agents of the Committee, holding their prisoner by the arms, came into view. One man was walking ahead and was the first to approach Chauvelin. He had a small screw of paper in his hand, which he gave to his chief.

"Found inside the lining of the prisoner's hat, citizen," he reported curtly and opened the shutter of a small dark-lantern which he wore at his belt.

Chauvelin took the paper from his subordinate. A weird, unexplainable foreknowledge of what was to come caused his

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hand to shake and beads of perspiration to moisten his forehead. He looked up and saw the prisoner standing before him. Crushing the paper in his hand, he snatched the lantern from the agent's belt and flashed it in the face of the quarry, who at the last had been so easily captured.

Immediately a hoarse cry of disappointment and of rage escaped his throat.

"Who is this man?" he cried.

One of the agents gave reply:

"It is old Victor, the landlord of the Bon Copain. He is just a fool, who has been playing a practical joke."

Tournefort, too, at sight of the prisoner, had uttered a cry both of dismay and of astonishment.

"Victor!" he exclaimed. "Name of a dog, citizen, what are you doing here?"

But Chauvelin had gripped the man by the arm so fiercely that the latter swore with the pain.

"What is the meaning of this?" he queried roughly.

"Only a bet, citizen," retorted Victor reproachfully. "No reason to fall on an honest patriot for a bet, just as if he were a mad dog."

"A joke? A bet?" murmured Chauvelin hoarsely, for his throat now felt hot and parched. "What do you mean? Who are you, man? Speak, or I'll——"

"My name is Jean Victor," replied the other. "I am the landlord of the Bon Copain. An hour ago a man came into my cabaret. He was a queer, consumptive creature with a churchyard cough that made you shiver. Some of my customers knew him by sight, told me that the man's name was Rateau and that he was an habitué of the Liberté in the rue Christine. Well, he soon fell into conversation, first with me, then with some of my customers—talked all sorts of silly nonsense, made absurd bets with everybody. Some of these he won, and others he lost; but I must say that when he lost he always paid up most liberally.

"Then we all got excited, and soon bets flew all over the place. I don't rightly know how it happened at the last, but all at once he bet me that I would not dare to walk out then and there in the dark, as far as the Pont Neuf, wearing his blouse and hat and carrying a bundle the same as his under my arm. I not dare? I, Jean Victor, who was a fine fighter in my day! I bet him a gold-piece that I would, and he said that he would make it five if I came back without my bundle, having thrown it over the parapet into any passing boat. Well, citizen!" continued Jean Victor with a laugh, "I ask you, what would you have done? Five gold-pieces means a fortune these hard times, and I tell you the man was quite honest and always paid liberally when he lost. He slipped behind the counter and took off his blouse and hat, which I put on.

"Then we made up a bundle with some cabbage heads and a few carrots, and out I came. I didn't think there could be anything wrong in the whole affair—just the tomfoolery of a man who has got the betting mania and in whose pocket money is just burning a hole. And I have won my bet," concluded Jean Victor, still unabashed, "and I want to go back and get my money. If you don't believe me, come with me to my cabaret. You will find the Citizen Rateau there, for sure; and I know that I shall find my five gold-pieces."

Chauvelin had listened to the man as he would to some weird dream-story, wherein ghouls and devils had played a part. Tournefort, who was watching him, was awed by the look of fierce rage and grim hopelessness which shone from his chief's pale eyes. The other agents laughed. They were highly amused at the tale, but they would not let the prisoner go.

"If Jean Victor's story is true, citizen," their sergeant said, speaking to Chauvelin, "there will be witnesses to it over at Le Bon Copain. Shall we take the prisoner straightaway there and await your further orders?"

Chauvelin gave a curt acquiescence, nodding his head like some insentient wooden automaton. The screw of paper was still in his hand: it seemed to sear his palm. Tournefort even now broke into a grim laugh. He had just undone the bundle which Jean Victor had thrown over the parapet of the bridge. It contained two heads of cabbage and a bunch of carrots. Then he ordered the agents to march on with their prisoner, and they, laughing and joking with Jean Victor, gave a quick turn, and soon their heavy footsteps were echoing down the flagstones of the bridge.

Chauvelin waited, motionless and silent, the dark-lantern still held in his shaking

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hand, until he was quite sure that he was alone. Then only did he unfold the screw of paper.

It contained a few lines scribbled in pencil—just that foolish rhyme which to his fevered nerves was like a strong irritant, a poison which gave him an unendurable sensation of humiliation and impotence:

> We seek him here—we seek him there,
> Chauvelin seeks him everywhere.
> Is he in heaven? Is he in ——?
> That demmed, elusive Pimpernel!

He crushed the paper in his hand and with a loud groan of misery fled over the bridge like one possessed.

VII

MADAME LA COMTESSE DE SUCY never went to England. She was one of those French women who would sooner endure misery in their own beloved country than comfort anywhere else. She outlived the horrors of the revolution and speaks in her memoirs of the man Bertin. She never knew who he was nor whence he came. All that she knew was that he came to her like some mysterious agent of God, bringing help, counsel, a semblance of happiness, at the moment when she was at the end of all her resources and saw grim starvation staring her and her children in the face.

He appointed all sorts of strange places in out-of-the-way Paris where she was wont to meet him, and one night she confided to him the history of her diamonds and hardly dared to trust his promise that he would get them for her.

Less than twenty-four hours later he brought them to her, at the poor lodgings in the rue Blanche which she occupied with her children under an assumed name. That same night she begged him to dispose of them. This also he did, bringing her the money the next day.

She never saw him again after that.

But Citizen Tournefort never quite got over his disappointment of that night. Had he dared, he would have blamed Citizen Chauvelin for the discomfiture. It would have been better to have apprehended the man Rateau while there was a chance of doing so with success.

As it was, the impudent ruffian slipped clean away, and was never heard of again at the Bon Copain or at the Liberté. The customers at the cabaret certainly corroborated the story of Jean Victor. The man Rateau, they said, had been honest to the last. When time went on and Jean Victor did not return, he said that he could no longer wait, had work to do for the Government over the other side of the water and was afraid he would get punished if he dallied. But, before leaving, he laid the five gold-pieces on the table. Every one wondered that so humble a workman had so much money in his pocket and was, withal, so lavish with it. But these were not the times when one inquired too closely into the provenance of money in the pocket of a good patriot.

And Citizen Rateau was a good patriot, for sure.

And a good fellow, to boot.

Every one drank his health in Jean Victor's sour wine—after which he went his way.

HOME

by **GEORGE GATLIN**

ROAD-KID, comet, royal-tramp,
Wanderers bred-in-the-bone;
Oh, a gay-cat sings when clicking rails
Hum the tune of "Home, Sweet Home."

Road-kid, comet, royal-tramp,
Blown-in-the-glass they roam,
Tracking across the wide, wide world,
When the goal of it all is—home.

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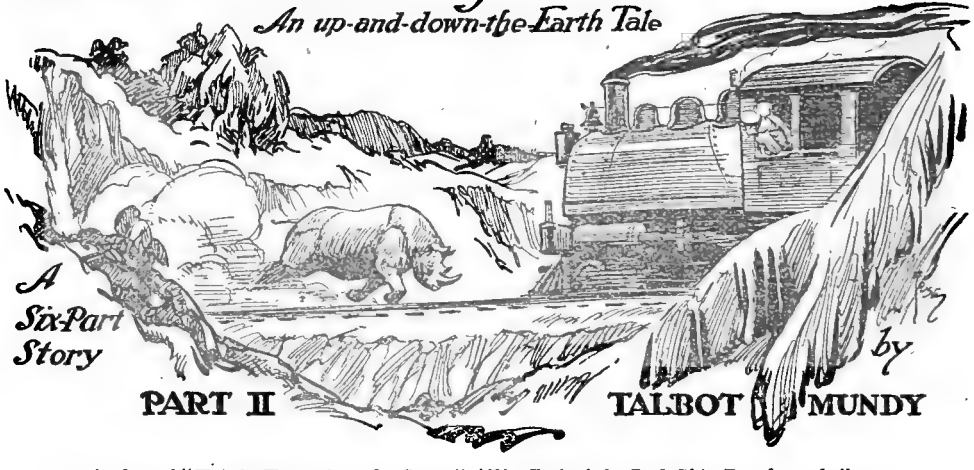
On the TRAIL *of* TIPPOO TIB

An up-and-down-the-Earth Tale



A Six-Part Story

PART II

by TALBOT MUNDY

Author of "Heinie Horns into the Game," "The End of the Bad Ship Bundesrath," *etc.*

The first part of the story briefly retold in story form.

WE first heard of Tippoo Tib and his ivory in the lazaretto at Zanzibar, where a French steamer had dumped us—Monty, Fred Oakes, Bill Yerkes and me. A one-eyed attendant told us of the treasure, and, because it was seeking fortune that had sent us wandering up and down the earth, we kept our ears open to the story of the old Arab and his great hoard of ivory hidden somewhere in the Congo. We found it a prize worth trying for and prepared to set out at once.

Rumor of our intended search spread quickly about Zanzibar, and many men came to us. Hassan was first, a reputed nephew of Tippoo Tib himself. Then a Greek denounced Hassan as a German spy and boasted valiantly of what he, Georges Coutlass, could do to aid us. Both we listened to politely and sent on their ways.

We made our plans.

"I'll go interview the King of Belgium," said Monty, who is Lord Montdidier and Kirkcudbrightshire and whom we had elected leader of the party. "Fred must go to British East and watch Schillingschen, the German, who is supposed to know all about this thing. Then you and Yerkes may as well go by way of British East to Muanza on Victoria Nyanza and from there to the Congo border. Yerkes is the only American in the crowd, and they'll suspect him least of all. He can make a great show of looking for ground to settle on."

Hassan came around again, and Georges Coutlass. It was while we were pleasantly engaged in throwing the latter down-stairs that we met Lady Saffren Waldon.

This lady, of uncertain age, had no savory history, for scandal had linked her name with an episode concerning papers stolen from the War Office and delivered to a German agent, and now she was probably a German agent herself. Monty warned us to keep away from her, but that night Yerkes and I were duped into rushing into her room, drawn there by well-feigned screams for aid. Three great Arabs caught us and pressed knives against our throats, while the charming lady told us to tell Lord Montdidier he might sign an agreement to share the ivory with the Sultan of Zanzibar—or he should suffer the consequences. We did not think it worth while to bother Monty with a report of the affair.

Then the four of us sailed from Zanzibar, Monty going to Brussels to see the king and we others to British East in accordance with the plan. On the ship that took us were Hassan and Georges Coutlass and Lady Saffren Waldon.

At Mombasa we learned that we were suspected persons, and only after we had paid an enormous deposit were we allowed to have the guns we had brought along.

That was the first obstacle we had to overcome.

MOMBASA is a fairly large island, but the built-over part of it is small; so it was not surprizing that we should emerge from the office face to face with Lady Saffren Waldon. She was the one surprized, not we. She probably thought she had spiked our guns in that part of the world forever, and the sight of us coming, laughing, from the very office where we should have been made glum must have been disconcerting.

She was riding on one of the little trolley-cars, pushed by two boys in white official uniform, dressed in her flimsiest best, a lace parasol across her knee, and beside her an obvious member of the

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Government—young and so recently from home as not to have lost his pink cheeks yet.

Had there not been an awning over the trolley-car, she might have used the parasol to make believe she had not seen us. But the awning precluded that, and we were not more than two or three yards away.

"Laugh!" whispered Fred.

So we crossed the track laughing, and the trolley had to pause to let us by. We laughed as we raised our helmets to her—laughed both at her and at the pink and white puppy she had taken in leash. And then the sort of thing happened that nearly always does when men with a reasonable faith in their own integrity make up their minds to see opprobrium through. Fate stepped hard on our arm of the balance.

If built-over Mombasa is a small place, so is Africa. So is the world. Striding down the hill from the other hotel—the rival one, the Royal—came a man so well-known in so many lands that they talk of naming a tenth of a continent after him—the mightiest hunter since Nimrod, and very likely mightier than he; surely, more looked-up to and respected—a little, wiry-looking, freckled, wizened man whose beard had once been red, who walked with a decided limp and blinked genially from under the brim of a very neat khaki helmet.

"Why, bless my soul!" he exclaimed, in a squeaky, worn-out voice that is as well-known as his face, and he quickened his pace down-hill.

"Courtney!" said Fred. "There's only one man I'd rather meet!"

The little man laughed.

"Oh, you and your Montdidier are still inseparable, I suppose! How are you, Fred? I'm glad to see you. Who are your friends?"

At that minute out came the collector from his office—stood on the step and stared. Fred introduced us to Courtney, and I experienced the thrill of shaking hands with the man accounts of whose exploits had fired my schoolboy imagination and made stay-at-home life forever after an impossibility.

"I missed the steamer, Fred. Not another for a week. Going down now to see about a passage to Somaliland. I suppose you'll be at the club after dinner?"

"No," said Fred. "We've an invitation, but I think we'll send a note and say we can't come. We'll dine at our hotel and sit on the veranda afterward."

I wondered what Fred was driving at, and so did the collector, who was headed across the street and listening with all ears.

"That so? Not a bad idea. They've very kindly made me an honorary member of the club, but I rather expect there's a string to that—eh, Fred, don't you? They'll expect stories—stories. I get tired of telling the same tales so many times over. Suppose I join you fellows, eh? I'm at the Royal. You at the other place? Suppose I join you after dinner, and we have a pipe together on the veranda?"

"Nothing I'd like better," said Fred, and I felt too pleased with the prospect to say anything at all.

Growing old is a foolish and unnecessary business, but there is no need to forego while young the thrills of unashamed hero-worship; in fact, that is one of the ways of continuing young. It is only the disillusioned—poor deceived ones—and the cynics who grow old ungracefully.

Courtney went to talk with the collector, and we went to dinner. It was a good dinner for East Africa. Shark steak figured in it, under a more respectable name, and there was zebu hump, guinea-fowl and more different kinds of fruit than a man could well remember. When it was over, we sat in deep armchairs on the long, wide veranda that fronts the whole hotel. The evening sea-breeze came and wafted in on us the very scents of Araby; the night sounds that whisper of wilderness gave the lie to a tinkling guitar that somewhere in the distance spoke of civilized delights. The surf crooned on coral half a mile away, and very good cigar smoke—from a box that Monty had sent ashore with our belongings—supplemented coffee and the other aids to physical contentment.

Then, limping between the armchairs and ashamed that we should rise to greet him—motioning us down again with a little nervous laugh—Courtney came to us. Within five minutes of his coming, the world and the clock and the laws of men might have all reversed themselves for aught we cared. Without really being conscious he was doing it, Courtney plunged into our problem, grasped it, sized it up, advised us, flooded us with priceless, wonderful advice. And he did it with such almost feminine sympathy that I believe we would

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have been telling him our love affairs at last, if a glance at the watch he wore in a case at his belt had not told him it was 3 A.M.

"There's trouble," he began when he had filled his pipe. "You boys are in trouble. What is it?" he asked, shifting and twitching in his seat—refusing an armchair—refusing a drink.

"Tell us first what's the matter with you," said Fred.

"Oh, nothing. An old wound. A lion once dragged me by this shoulder half a mile or so. At this time of year I get pains. They last a day or two, then pass. Go on—tell me."

He never sat really still once that whole evening, yet he never once complained or made a gesture of impatience.

"I propose," said Fred, with a glance at Yerkes and me, "to tell Courtney everything without reserve."

The little old hunter nodded, watching us with bright blue eyes. I received the impression that he knew more secrets than he could tell if he talked down all the years that might be left him. He was the sort of man in whom nearly every one confides.

"We're after Tippoo Tib's ivory!" said Fred, plunging into the middle of things. "Monty has gone to drive a bargain with the King of Belgium. Do you think it's a wild-goose chase?"

Courtney chuckled.

"No," he said. "I wouldn't call it that. They've been killing elephants in Africa ever since the flood. Ivory must have accumulated. It's somewhere. Some of it must be so old and well-seasoned as to be practically priceless, unless rats have spoiled it. Rats play old Harry with ivory, you know."

"Have you a notion where it is?" demanded Fred.

Courtney laughed.

"Behold me leaving the country!" he said. "If I knew, I'd look. If I saw, I'd take!"

"Can you give us a hint?"

"There are caves near the summit of Mount Elgon that would hold the world's revenues. None of them have ever been thoroughly explored. Cannibals live in some of them. Cannibals and caverns is a combination that might appeal to Tippoo Tib, but there's no likelihood that he buried all that ivory in one place, you know. I suspect the greater part is in the Congo, and that the Germans know its whereabouts within a mile or two."

We had forgotten our own troubles. Courtney, too, seemed to forget for the moment that he had begun by asking us a question.

"REMEMBER Emin Pasha? When was it—'87—'88—'89 that Stanley went and rescued him? Perhaps you recall what was then described as Emin's ingratitude after the event? British Government offered him a billet. Khedive of Egypt cabled him the promise of a job—all on Stanley's recommendation. Emin turned 'em all down and accepted a job from the Germans. Nobody understood it at the time. My own idea is that Emin thought he knew more or less where that hoard is. He didn't really want to come away with Stanley, you know.

"Being a German, I suppose he preferred to share his secret with his own crowd. I daresay he thought of telling Stanley but judged that the 'Rock-Breaker' might demand a too large share. The value of the stuff must be so enormous that it's almost worth going to war about, from the point of view of a nation hungry for new colonies. Emin is dead, and it's likely he left no exact particulars behind him. To my personal knowledge, the Germans have had a swarm of spies for a long time operating beyond the Congo border."

"Were you looking for the stuff yourself?" I asked.

"Oh, no," he laughed. "But, when I'm hunting, I look about me. There's a section of country, called the Bahr el Gazal, that the Congo people claim but that I believe will eventually prove to lie on the British side of the boundary. It was good elephant country—which is to say, bad living and traveling for man—since the earth took shape out of ooze. Awful, swampy, malarious, densely wooded, dangerous country, sparsely inhabited by savages not averse to cannibalism when they've opportunity.

"The ivory may be there. If the Germans know it's there, they're naturally afraid the British Government would claim the whole district the minute the secret was out. Their plan may possibly be to wait until a boundary dispute arises in the

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ordinary course of time—keeping a cautious eye on the cache meanwhile, of course—and then take the Congo Government side. If they can contrive to have it acknowledged as Congo territory, they might then pick a quarrel with the Congo Government—or come to some sort of terms with them."

"But doesn't our Government know all this?" demanded Fred.

"That depends on what you mean by the word 'know,'" answered Courtney. "I've made no secret of my own opinion."

"England doesn't deserve to keep her colonies!" vowed Fred, caught in a sudden flood of indignation.

Courtney laughed.

"When you've seen as many of the other nations' colonies as I have, you'll qualify that verdict! We do our best. God gave us our work to do, and the devil came and made us stupid! Take this country for instance."

"Yes!" agreed Fred. "Take this country! We came ashore today——"

"I know," said Courtney. "I've been told this evening." His eyes changed, and his voice took on the almost feminine note of appeal that came strangely from a big-game hunter. "You boys must overlook things. These boys you're angry with are younger than you, Fred. That collector you've contrived to pick a quarrel with has fought Arabs and cannibal troops—odds against him of fifty or a hundred to one, mind you—all across the Congo and back again. He fought in the Uganda Mutiny. He's a man.

"He's a merchant, though, with a merchant's education. He was taken over with the rest of the clerks when the British Government superseded the British East Africa Trading Company. He has never had the advantage of legal training. Went to a common school. No advantages of any kind. Poorly paid and overworked. There's no money in the country yet. Nobody to tax. Salaries—expenses and so on—come from home, voted by Parliament. As long as that condition lasts, they're all going to feel nervous. They know they'll get the blame for everything that goes wrong and precious little credit in any case.

"All right," said Fred. "I'll grant all that."

"But what gets me," Yerkes interrupted, "is that they should condemn us out-of-hand—on sight—untried—on the say-so of this Lady Saffren Waldon. She carries German letters of credit. She's so notoriously in league with Germans that you'd think even these little Napoleons 'ud know it. I'm American myself, thank God, but these two men are their own kith and kin. Why should they judge their own countrymen, unheard, on the say-so of a woman like that? That's what rattles me!"

Courtney blew six smoke-rings.

"You'll have to forgive them, lad. Too many of the Englishmen who have come here were bad hats from the South, so hot-footed that they burned the grass. Then—don't forget that the Germans have a military government to the south of us—all experienced men—a great many of them unmitigated rascals, but nearly all of them clever—students of strategy and psychology and tactics—some of them brilliant men who have had to apply for colonial service because of debt or scandal.

"They're over-manned where we are under-manned—backed up from home where our boys are only blamed and neglected—well-supplied with troops and ammunition where our police are kept down to the danger-point—now and then even without cartridges. The Germans have no railway yet, but they've a policy and they keep it secret. We have a railway and no policy, except retrenchment and economy. I'm convinced the German Government has no scruples. We have. So you must sympathize with our young men, not quarrel with them."

"Believe me," I said, "we didn't start out to quarrel with anybody. That woman lied about us. There's no excuse for believing her without giving us a hearing."

"Oh, yes, there is. I spoke with her myself this evening," said Courtney. "She's staying at my hotel, you know. She's a match for much more experienced men than our young officials. They've been fighting Arabs, not flirting. She had the impudence to try to flatter me. I don't doubt she's telling a crowd of men tonight that I'm in love with her—perhaps not exactly telling them that, but giving them to understand it. Why don't I stroll down to the club and deny it? For the same reason that you don't openly denounce her! It's semi- or wholly-sentimental chivalry—rank stupidity, if you like to call it that—but it's national, I'm glad to say, and I'm as proud of it as any one."

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"Doesn't it look to you," said Fred, "that if she and the German Government are so infernally anxious to spoil our chances—and they suspect what we're after, you know—doesn't it look to you as if there may really be something in this quest of ours?"

"Undoubtedly," said Courtney. "There's ivory in it, tons and tons and tons of ivory. Somebody will find it some day."

"Join us then!" said Fred. "Cancel your trip to Somaliland and come with us! I can speak for Monty. I know he'll welcome you into the partnership!"

"I believe I could almost speak for Monty too," laughed Courtney. "He and I were at Eton together, and we've never ceased being friends. But I can't come with you. No. I'm making a sort of semi-official trip. I shall hunt, of course, but there are observations to be made. The pan-Islamic theory is said to be making headway in Somaliland."

"Do you feel you have any lien on the Elgon Caves and Bahr el Gazal clues?" Fred asked.

"No. I make you a present of those ideas. I'm sure I hope you find the stuff. I'm wondering, though—I'm wondering."

"I'll bet you a dollar I'm thinking of the same thing," said Yerkes.

"Out with it, then."

"What's to prevent the Germans from making their own dicker with the King of the Belgians or with the Congo Government and rifling the hoard on a fifty-fifty or some such basis?"

"Correct," said Courtney. "I confess myself puzzled about that. But I know no European politics. There may be a thousand reasons. And then, you know, the King of the Belgians has the name of being a grasping dealer. The management of his private zone on the Congo is unspeakable. It's possible the Germans may prefer not to risk putting his Majesty on the scent."

"Well, we've our work cut out," said Fred, laughing and yawning. "That woman has started us off with a bad name."

"That is one thing I can really do for you," Courtney answered. "I've no official standing, but the boys all listen to me. I'll tell them——"

"For the love of God don't tell them too much!" Fred exclaimed.

"I'll tell them you're friends of mine," he went on. "I wouldn't be surprized if your licenses and ammunition permits were here at the hotel by ten tomorrow morning. There's a train for Nairobi tomorrow noon, and not another for three days. I'd take tomorrow's train if I were you. I always find, in going anywhere, the start's the principal thing. You'll go?"

"We will," we answered, one after the other.

"Good night, then, boys; I'll be off."

But we walked with him down to his hotel, I—and I think the others—full to the teeth with the pleasure of knowing him, as well as of envy of his scars, his five or six South African campaigns, his adventures and—by no means least—his unblemished record as a gentleman. Merely a little bit of a man with a limp, but better than a thousand men who lacked his gentleness.

IV

Delights—ah, ten are the dear delights—and the Book forbids them, one by one—
The broad old roads of a thousand loves—back turned to the Law—the lawless fun—
Old arts for new—old hours reborn—and who shall mourn when the sands have run?

I was old when they told the siren tales
(All ears were open then!)
And the harps were afire with plucked desire
For the white ash oars again—
For oars and sail and the open sea,
High prow against pure blue,
The good sea spray on eye and lip,
The thrumming hemp, the rise and dip,
The plunge and the roll of a driven ship
As the old course boils anew!

Sweetly I call; the captains come. The home ties draw at hearts in vain.
Potent the spell of Africa! Who east and south the course has ta'en
By Guardafui to Zanzibar may go, but he shall come again.

The Nju Hapa Song, Verse 4.

COURTNEY proved better than his word. Our big-game licenses arrived after breakfast—and permits for five hundred rounds of rifle ammunition each. In an envelope, in addition, was Fred's check with the collector's compliments and the request that we kindly call and pay for the licenses. In other words we now had absolution.

We called and were received as fellow men. Such was the genius of Courtney's friendship. A railway man looked in. The

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collector's dim office became awake with jokes and laughter.

"Going up today?" he asked. "I'll see you get berths on the train."

We little realized at the moment the extent of that consideration, but understanding dawned fifteen minutes before high noon when we strolled to the station behind a string of porters carrying our luggage. Courtney was there to see us off, and he looked worried.

Crammed in the vestibule in front of us were fifty people, fretfully marshaling in line their strings of porters lest any later comer get by ahead of them; foremost of them, with his breast against the ticket window, was Georges Coutlass. Things seemed not to be proceeding as he wished.

There was one babu behind the window —a mild, unhappy-looking Punjabee or Dekkani Mussulman. There was another at the scales, who knew almost no English; his duty was to weigh—do sums—write the result on a slip and then justify his arithmetic to office babu and passenger before any sort of progress could be made.

"You pair of black murderers!" yelled Coutlass as we took our places in line. "You dirty robbers! You pickpockets! You train-thieves! Go out and dig your graves! I will make an end of you!"

"You should not use abusive language," the babu retorted mildly, stopping to speak and then stopping again to wipe his spectacles and his forehead and his hands.

Coutlass exploded.

"Shouldn't, eh? Who the —— are you to tell me what I shouldn't do? Sell me a ticket, you black plunderer, d'you hear! Look! Listen!"

He snatched a piece of paper from the babu's hand and turned to face the impatient crowd.

"This hell-cat—" the unhappy babu looked less like a hell-cat than any vision of the animal I ever imagined—"wants to make out that seventy-one times seven annas and three pice is forty-nine rupees, eleven annas! Oh, you charlatan! You mountebank! You black-blooded robber! You miscreant! Cut your throat, I order you!"

The babu expostulated, stammered, quailed. Coutlass drew in his breath for the gods of Greece alone knew what heights of fury next. But interruption entered.

"There, that's enough of you! Get to the back of the line!"

The man who had promised us berths came abruptly through the barrier and, unlike the babu, did not appear afraid of any one. The Greek let out his gathered breath with a look of fury, like a seal coming up to breathe. Taking that for a symptom of opposition, the newcomer, very cool in snow-white uniform and helmet, seized Coutlass by the neck and hustled him, arguing like a boiler under pressure, through the crowd.

"If you miss the train, serve you right!" he said. "Babus are willing servants, to be treated gently!"

Then he saw us.

"You're late! Where's your luggage? These your porters? All right—put you on your honor. Go on through. Save time. Have your stuff weighed and settle the bill at Nairobi. All of it, mind! Babu, let these people through!"

Followed by Courtney, who seemed to have right of way wherever it suited him to wander, we filed through the gate, crossed the blazing-hot platform and boarded a compartment labeled "Reserved." The railway man nodded and left us to hurry and help sell tickets.

It was what they called a mixed train, mixed, that is, of freight and passengers—third-class in front, second next, then first, and a dozen little iron freight-cars in front of the guard's caboose. Communication was over the roof, for in those days there were neither tunnels nor bridges on that railway, and there was a single seat on the roof at each end of first and second-class compartments, reached by a ladder for any passenger enamoured of the view.

For the babu's encouragement and to increase the panic of the ticketless, the engineer was blowing the whistle at short intervals. Passengers began coming through the barrier in sudden spurts, baggage in either hand and followed hot-foot by natives with their heavier stuff. They took headers into the train, and the porters generally came back grinning.

"I see through the whistling stunt," Yerkes announced. "My, but that fellow on the engine has faith; or else the system's down real fine in these parts! He won't be back for a week. Those woolly-headed porters are going to save up his commission

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and hand it to him when he brings the down-train in. The game's good: he whistles—passenger runs—can't make change—pays two, three, four, ten times what the job's worth—and the porters divvy up with the engineer. But, good lord, the porters must be honest!"

PRESENTLY a pale white man in khaki, with a red beard, entered our compartment, and Courtney had to make room for him on the seat. He apologized with less conviction of real regret than I ever remember noticing, although the pouches under his eyes gave him a rather world-weary look.

"Not another first-class berth on the train—every last one engaged. Might be worse. Might have had to ride with Indians. Curse of this country, Indians are. I'd rid the land of 'em double-quick if Government 'ud pay me a rupee a head—an' I'd provide cartridges! But Government likes 'em! Ugh! Ever travel in one compartment with a dozen of 'em? Sleep in a tent with a score of 'em? Share blankets with a couple of 'em on a cold night? No? You be glad I'm not an Indian. One's enough!"

The time to start arrived and passed; hot passengers continued spurting for the train at intervals—all sorts of passengers—English, Mauritius-French, Arab, Goanese, German, Swahili, Indian, Biluchi—one Japanese—two Chinamen—half-breeds, quarter-breeds of all the hues from ivory to dull red, guinea-yellow and bleached-out black; but the second-class compartment facing our door remained empty. Nobody came to claim it even when the engine's extra shrill screaming and, at last, the ringing of a bell warned Courtney that time was really up and he got out on the platform.

"Good-by," he said through the window. "I've done what I could to bring you luck. Don't be tempted to engage the first servants who apply to you at Nairobi. If you wait there a week, I'll send my Kazimoto to you; he's a very good gun-bearer. But remember the rule about dogs: a good one has one master! Oh—and one more scrap of advice."

He came close to the window, but at that moment the engine gave a final scream and really started. Passengers yelled farewells. The engine's apoplectic coughs divided the din into spasms, and there came a great bellowing from the ticket-office. He could not speak softly and be heard at all. Louder he had to speak and then louder, ending almost with a shout.

"The best way to Elgon is by way of Kisumu and Mumias, whatever anybody else may tell you. And, if you find the stuff, or any of it—" he was running beside the train now—"go and make terms first with Government—then—after you've made terms—tell 'em you've found it! Find the stuff—make terms—then produce what you've found! Get my meaning? Good-by, all! Good luck!"

The train was moving slowly, and there was still a good length of platform before our car would be clear of the station altogether. We heard a roar like a bull's from behind, and a dozen men—white, black and yellow—came careering down the platform, carrying guns, baggage, bedding and all the paraphernalia that travelers in Africa affect.

First in the van was Georges Coutlass, showing a fine turn of speed but tripping on a bedsheet at every other stop, with his uncased rifle in one hand, his hat in the other, an empty bandolier over one shoulder and a bag, slung by a strap, swinging out behind him. He made a leap for the second-class compartment in front of us and landed on all fours on the platform. We opened the door of our compartment to watch him better.

Once on the platform, he threw his rifle into the compartment and braced himself to catch the things his stampeding followers hurled after him—caught them deftly and tossed them in, yelling instructions in Greek, Swahili, Arabic, English and two or three other languages.

Then came his traveling-companions—caught by one hand and dragged on their knees up the steps. They were heavy men, but he snatched all three in like a boy pulling chestnuts from the fire.

The first was a Greek, evil-looking and without the spirit that in the case of Coutlass made a stranger prone to overlook shortcomings—dressed in khaki, with rifle and empty bandolier. Next, chin, elbow, hand and knee, up the steps came a fat, tough-looking Goanese, dressed anyhow at all in dirty pink-colored shirt, dark pants and a helmet—also with rifle and empty bandolier.

I judged he weighed about two hundred and eighty pounds, but Coutlass yanked him

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in like a fish coming overside. Last came a man who might be Arab—or part-Arab, part-Swahili—whom I did not recognize at first, fat, black, dressed in the white cotton garments and red fez of the more or less well-to-do native and voluble with rare profanity.

"Johnson!" shouted Fred with almost the joy of greeting an old acquaintance.

It was Hassan, sure enough, short-winded and afraid, but more afraid of being left behind than of the manhandling. Coutlass took hold of his outstretched arm, hoisted him, cracked his shins for him against the top step and hurled him rump-over-shoulders into the compartment. There the other Greek and the Goanese grabbed him by the arms and legs and hove him into an upper berth, where he lay gasping like a fish out of water and moaning miserably.

Their compartment was a mess of luggage, blankets, odds-and-ends and angry men. Coutlass went in and found a whisky bottle and swallowed the stuff undiluted while the other Greek and the Goanese waited their turn greedily. There was nothing much in that compartment to make a man like Hassan feel at home.

"Those Greeks," said our red-bearded traveling-companion as we shut our door again, "are only one degree better than Indians—a shade less depraved, perhaps—a sight more dangerous! I sure do hate a Punjabee, but I don't love Greeks! The natives call 'em *Swana masikini* to their faces—that means Mister Mean White, y'know. They're a lawless lot, the Greeks you'll run across in these parts. My advice is, shoot first. Walk behind 'em! If they ain't armed, hoof 'em till they cut an' run! Greeks are no good!"

We introduced ourselves. He told us his name was Brown.

"There's three Browns in this country: 'Hell-fire' Brown of Elementaita, Joseph Henry Brown of Gilgil and Brown of Lumbwa. Brown of Lumbwa's me. Don't believe a word either of the other two Browns tell you! Yes, we're all settlers. Country good to settle in? Depends what you call good. If you like lots of room an' hunting, natives to wait on you an' your own house on your own square mile—comfortable climate—no conventions—nor no ten commandments, why, it's pretty hard to beat.

"But if you want to wear a white shirt and be moral and get rich, it's rotten! You've a chance to make money if you're not over law-abiding, for there's elephants. But, if you're moral an' obey the laws, you haven't but one chance, an' she's a slim one."

"Well," said Fred genially, "tell us about the only one. We're men to whom the ten commandments are——"

"You look it!" Brown interrupted. "Well, you'll never find it! It's Tippoo Tib's ivory. I mean to have a crack at spotting it myself—soon as I get my farm fenced. Gov'ment offers ten per cent. to whoever leads 'em to it. They'll be lucky if they get ten per cent. of it themselves! Man alive, but they say there's a whale of a hoard of it! Hundreds o' tons of ivory, all waiting to be found and fossicked out an' took!

"Say—if I was some o' those Greeks, for instance, tell you what I'd do: I'd off to Zanzibar an' kidnap Tippoo Tib. The old card's still living. I'd apply a red-hot poker to his silver-side an' the underparts o' his tripe-casings. He'd tell me where the stuff is quicker 'n winking! Supposin' I was a Greek without morals or no compunctions or nothin', that's what I'd do! I don't hold with allowin' any man to play dog in the manger with all that plunder!"

"Have you a notion where the stuff might be?" Fred wondered guilelessly.

"Ah! That 'ud be tellin'!"

AT FIRST we passed occasional baobabs with trunks fifteen or twenty feet thick and off-shoots covering a quarter of an acre. Then the trees thinned out to the sparse and shriveled all-but-dead things that struggle for existence on the border-lines between man's land and desolation.

The sun beat down on the iron roof. The heat beat up from the tracks. Red dust polluted the drinking water in the little upright tank. Dust filled eyes, nostrils, hair. Dust caked and grew stiff in the sweat that streamed down us. Yet we stopped once at a station, and humans lived there, and a man got off the train. A lone, lean babu and his leaner, more miserable native crew came out and eyed the train like vultures waiting for a beast to die.

But we did not die, and the train passed on into illimitable dusty redness, leaving

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them to watch the hot rails ribbon out behind our grumbling caboose.

There began to be carousing in the second-class compartment next ahead of us. Our own Brown of Lumbwa produced a stone crock of Irish whisky from a basket, imbibed copiously, offered us in turn the glistening neck, looked relieved at our refusal and grew voluble.

"Hear them Greeks an' that Goa. You'd think they were gentlemen o' breeding to hear 'em carrying on! Truth is, we've no Government worth a moment's consid'ration, an' everybody knows it, Greeks included! You men lookin' for farms? Take your time! Once you get a farm an' get your house built an' stock bought an' stuff planted—once you've got your capital invested, so to speak, they've got you! Till then you're free! Till then they'll maybe treat you with consideration! Till then you leave the country when you like an' kiss yourselves good-by to them an' Africa. Till then they've got no hold!

"The courts can fine you, maybe, but can they make you pay? It's none so easy if you're half-awake! But take me: suppose I break a reggylation. What happens? They know where to find me—how much I've got—where it is—an', if I don't pay the fine, they come an' collar my cattle an' sticks! D'you notice any Greeks applyin' for farms? Not no crowds of 'em, you don't! I don't know one single Greek who has a farm in all East Africa! Any Goas? Not a bit of it! Any Indians? Not one! So, when a few extry elephants get shot, I get the blame—down at Lumbwa, where there ain't no elephants; an' the Greeks, Goas, Arabs an' Indians get fat on the swag!

"It's easy to keep track of a white man; the natives all know him, an' his name, an' where he lives, an' they report everything he does to the nearest Gov'ment officer. But Greeks an' Goas an' Indians an' Arabs ain't white; so the natives make no mention of 'em. They do the lootin'; we settlers get the blame. An' the whole perishing country's going to blazes as fast as a lump of ice melting in hell—but not so fast as I'd like to see it go. Have some o' this whisky, won't you?"

It happened that Fred, Yerkes and I were all thinking of the same thing. Yerkes put a hand to his neck and stroked the little scar the Arab knife had made in Zanzibar.

"What sort of a country's this for women?" Fred demanded.

"Which women?" Brown asked in a sort of mild amazement.

"White women?"

"Rotten! Leastwise, there aren't any. Yes, there's three. Two officials' wives an' 'Pioneer Jane,' French wife of a settler. Countin' Jane as one an' the two officials' wives an' her on this train, there's four."

Our eyes met.

"On this train?"

"On this train. Didn't you see her? She was watching you chaps through the window slits like the Queen o' Sheba keepin' tabs on Solomon. I made a try to get a seat in her carriage, but she ordered me out like Aunt Jemima puttin' out the cat the last thing. She's got a maid in with her, but the maid ain't white—Jew—Syrian—Levantine—Dago—some such breed. She's in this compartment next behind."

Our eyes met again. Fred laughed, and Yerkes leaned forward to whisper to me—

"She heard what Courtney said to us about the way to Mount Elgon!"

"D'you know her name?" asked Brown.

"No!" we all three lied together with one voice.

"I do! I seen it on the reservation card. Lady Isobel Saffren Waldon! Pretty high-soundin' patronymic, what? What's a woman with a title doin', d'you suppose? The title's no fake. She's got the blood, all right, all right! You ought to ha' heard her shoo me out! Lummy! A nestin' hen giving the office to a snake weren't in it to her an' me! Good-looker, too! What's she's doin' in East Africa?"

"Going to join her husband, perhaps," suggested Fred to put him off.

"There's no man o' that name in British East or Uganda. I know 'em all—every one."

"Father—brother—uncle—nephew—oh, perhaps she's just traveling," said Fred.

"Just traveling, my eye! Titled ladies don't come 'just traveling' in these parts——not by a sight, they don't—not alone!"

He helped himself to more whisky, but he had reached the stage where it had no further visible effect on him.

"Anyhow," he said, wiping the neck of the jar with his hand, "if she kids herself she'll be let go where she pleases—why, she kids herself!

"The king's writ runs maybe for thirty

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miles north o' this railway. Once over that, they can't catch you. But unless you're a black man, the natives tip the Gov'ment off, an' Gov'ment rounds you up afore you get two-thirds the way. They'll take less than half a chance with her ladyship, or I'm a Dutchman. Why? How would it look to have to bring her back between two native policemen? She'll not be allowed five miles outside Nairobi township!"

HE UP-ENDED his whisky again, consumed about a pint of it and settled down to sleep. We took him by the legs and arms and threw him on the upper berth to stew in the cabined heat under the roof.

Fred rubbed his hands and stroked his beard into the neat point it refuses to keep for long at a time in very hot weather.

"Let's stay in Nairobi," he said, "until Courtney sends that boy he promised us. We can put in the time asking questions, and then——"

"What then?" grumbled Yerkes.

"There may be truth in what Brown of Lumbwa says about a dead-line."

"Dead-line?"

"Beyond which the king's writ doesn't run."

"Betcherlife there's truth in it!" Brown mumbled from the upper berth.

Yerkes exploded silently, going through the motions of reeling off all the bad language he knew—not an insignificant performance.

"He's really asleep now," I said, standing on the lower berth and lifting the man's eyelid to make sure.

"Who cares?" said Yerkes. "We've given the game away. The woman heard Courtney shout about how to reach Mount Elgon. So did this sharp. Now he hears Fred talk about dead-lines and the king's writ and breaking laws! The game's up! Me for the down-train and a steamer!"

We smoked in silence, rendered more depressing by the deepening gloom outside. With the evening it grew no cooler. What little wind there was followed the train; so we traveled in stagnation. Utter darkness brought no respite but the fascination of flitting shadows and the ever-fresh mystery of African night.

The train drew up at last in a station in the shadow of great overleaning mountains, and the heat shut down on us like hairy coverings. We seemed to breathe through thicknesses of cloth, and the very trees that cast black shadow on the platform ends were stifling for lack of air.

"One hour for dinner!" called the guard, walking limply along the train. "Just an hour for dinner! Dinner's waiting!"

He was not at all a usual-looking guard. He was dressed in riding-breeches and puttee leggings and wore a worn-out horsey air as if in protest against the obligation to work in a black man's land.

"Only an hour for dinner, gents—train starts again on time!"

"Guard!" called a female voice we all three recognized. "Guard! Come here at once; I want you!"

We left Brown of Lumbwa snoring a good imitation of the Battle of Waterloo on the upper berth and filed out on to the dimly lighted platform. A space in the center was roofed with corrugated iron, and under that the yellow lamplight cast a maze of moving shadows as the passengers swarmed toward the dining-room. The smell of greasy cooking blended with the reek of axle and lamp-oil. At the platform's forward end shadowy figures were throwing cordwood into the tender, and the *thump-thump-thump* of that suggested impatience; everything else spoke of lethargy.

"Guard!" called the voice again. "Come, here, Guard!"

He stopped, in passing, to close our windows and lock our compartment door against railway thieves.

"There's a man asleep in there," I said.

"The 'eat'll sober 'im!" he grinned, slamming the last window down. "What'll you bet 'er 'ighness don't want me to fetch dinner to 'er? She was in the train in Mombasa two hours afore startin'-time, an' the things she ordered me to do 'ud have made a 'alf-breed think 'e was demeaning of 'imself! I 'aven't seen the color of 'er money yet. If she wants dinner she gets out and walks or 'er maid fetches it—you watch!"

Coutlass, the other Greek and the Goanese staggered out beside us on to the platform, drunk enough not to know whether Hassan was with them or not. He came out and stood beside them in a sort of alert defensive attitude.

"Guard!" called the voice again. "Where is the man?"

We followed the last of the crowd through the screened doors and took seats at a

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table marked "First-Class Only." There were four men there ahead of us: two Government officials, disinclined to talk: a missionary in a gray flannel shirt, suffering from fever and too suspicious to say good evening; and a man in charge of that section of the line, who checked the station-master's accounts and counted money in a tray between mouthfuls. Between us and the second-class tables was a wooden screen on short legs, and beyond that arose babel.

Second-class is democratic always and talks with its mouth full. In addition to our privilege of paying more for exactly the same food, we enjoyed exclusiveness, a dirty table-cloth and the extra smell from the kitchen door.

We had scarcely taken our seats when Coutlass swaggered in, closely followed by his gang. Inside the door he turned on Hassan.

"Black men eat outside!" he snarled and shoved him out again, backward. Then he came over to us and stood leering at the framed sign "First-Class Only," avoiding our eyes but plainly at war with us.

"Gassharamminy!" he growled. "You think you're popes or something! You three would want a special private piece of earth to spit on!" He raised his voice to a sort of scream. "I proclaim one class only!"

At that he lifted his foot about level with his chest and kicked the screen over. The crash brought everybody to his feet except the two officials and the railway man. They continued eating, and the railway man continued counting copper coins as if life depended on that alone.

"Sit down, all!" yelled Coutlass. "You will eat with better appetite now that you can behold the blushes of these virgins!"

Then he swaggered over to the long table, thrust the other Greek and the Goanese into chairs on either side of him and yelled for food.

The Goanese manager—a wizened old black man with perfectly white hair—came running from the kitchen in a state of near-collapse, the sweat streaming off him and his hands trembling.

"What shall I do?" he asked, almost upsetting the railway man's tray of money. "That man is crazy! He came in once before and broke the dishes! Twice he has come in here and eaten and refused to pay! What shall I do?"

"Nothing," said the railway man. "Go on serving dinner. Serve him, too."

The manager hurried out again, and the running to and fro resumed. Then in came the guard.

"First-class for two on trays!" he shouted.

The railway man beckoned to him, and he winked as he passed by us.

"When you've seen to that and had your own meal, I want you," said the railway man.

"Thought you said the lady's maid would have to come and fetch the food?" I said maliciously as the guard passed my chair a second time.

"So I did. But, if you know how to refuse her, just teach me! I told her flat to have the maid fetch it. She let on they're both too frightened to cross the platform in the dark! Never saw anything like 'em! Tears! An' dignified! When I climbed down they was too afraid next to be left alone. Swore train-thieves 'ud murder 'em! I had to leave 'em my key to lock 'emselves in with until I come back with the grub! What d'you think of that?"

But our soup came, and one could not think and eat that stuff simultaneously. The railway man looked up for a moment, saw my face and explained in a moment of expansiveness that meat would not keep in that climate but was "perfectly good" when cooked.

"Besides," he added, "you'll get nothing more until you reach Nairobi tomorrow noon!"

That turned out to be not quite true, but as an argument it worked. We swallowed, like the lined-up merchant seamen taking lime-juice under the skipper's eye.

THE guard grew impatient and went into the kitchen, but he had scarcely got through the door when a scream came from the direction of the train that brought him back on the run. No black woman ever screams in just that way, and in a land of black and worse-than-black men imagination leaps at a white woman's call for help.

There was a stampede for the door by every one except the Greeks, the Goanese and the railway man. He had to guard the money. We poured through the screen doors, the guard fighting to burst between us. And, because—with a self-preserving instinct that I have never thought quite

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creditable to the human race—everybody ran toward his own compartment, it happened that we three and the two officials and the guard came first on the scene of trouble.

Brown of Lumbwa was still drunk—affectionate, it seemed, by that time.

"You've no call to be 'fraid o' me, li'l sweetheart!"

The door was open. Within the compartment all was dark, but every sound emerged. There came a stifled scream.

"Li'l stoopid! What d'you come in for 'f you're 'fraid o' poor ole Brown? I won't hurt you?"

The guard passed between us and went up the step. He listened, looked, disappeared through the open door, and there came a sound of struggling.

"Whassis?" shouted Brown. "An interloper? No, you don't! This is my li'l sweetheart! She came in to see me—didn't you, Matilda Ann?"

The woman apparently broke free. The guard yelled for help. Fred and one of the Government officials were nearest, and, as they entered, they passed the woman coming out. I recognized Lady Saffren Waldon's Syrian maid, with the big railway key that the guard had left with her in her fist. By that time there was a considerable crowd about our car, unable to see much because it stood in the way of the sation lamplight. She slipped through—to the right, not toward Lady Isobel's compartment—and I lost sight of her behind some men. I ran after her, but she was gone among the shadows; and, although I hunted up and down and in and, out I could find her nowhere.

When I returned to our car, Brown of Lumbwa was out on the platform with his hair all towseled and a wild eye. The guard was wiping a bloody nose, and everybody was inventing an account of what nobody had seen.

"Scrag him!" advised some expert on etiquette.

"What the —— right has anybody got," demanded Brown with querulous ferocity, "to interfere between me and a lady? Eh? Whose compartment was she in? Me in hers or her in mine? Eh? Me, I'm sleeping. Hasn't a gent a right to sleep? Next thing I know she's fingering my whiskers. How should I know she's not balmy on red beards an' makin' love to me? What right's she got in my compartment, anyhow? Who let her in? Who asked her? What if I did frighten her? What then?"

"Who was she?" demanded the official. "Had anybody seen her before?"

"The maid attending the lady in the next compartment," said I.

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Very well. Guard! See who is in there?"

The guard wiped blood from his nose and obeyed orders. We clustered round the steps to hear.

"'Ow many's in here?" he demanded.

There was no answer. He tried the door and it opened readily.

"'Scuse me, but is there two of you? I can't seen in the dark."

"Oh, is that our dinner?" said Lady Saffren Waldon's voice.

"No, ma'am, not the dinner yet."

"Why not, pray?"

"There's folks accusin' your maid o' enterin' the next compartment an—an——"

"Nonsense! My maid is here! You kept us so long waiting for dinner, we were both asleep! Ah! There's light at last, thank heaven!"

Two native porters, running along the roofs, were dropping lamps into the holes appointed for them, and the train that had been a block of darkness hewn out of the night was now a monster, many-eyed.

"They're both in there, so 'elp me!" the guard reported, retreating backward through the door and leering at us.

There remained nobody, except the still indignant Brown of Lumbwa, to levy charges, and the crowd remembered its dinner—not that anything could be expected to grow cold in that temperature.

"The train will start on time!" announced the babu station-master, and everybody hurried to the dining-room. Brown came with us, bewildered.

"How did it happen?" he demanded. "When did we get here? Why wasn't I called for dinner. How did she get in? Where did she go to?"

"Oh, come and eat curried cow; it's lovely!" answered Yerkes.

Fred overtook us at the door and whispered.

"Our things have been gone through, but I can't find that anything's missing."

Within the dining-room was new ground

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for discontent. The British race and its offshoots wash but disbelieve with almost unanimity in water as a drink. Every guest at either table had left at his place a partly emptied glass of beer or brandy and soda or whisky. Each looked for the glass on his return and found it empty.

"Those Greeks!" said the Goanese manager, with a fearful air and shoulders shrugged to disclaim his own responsibility.

Coutlass and the other Greek were sitting at table with a gorged look, glancing neither to the right or left, yet not eating. I looked at the railway official, who had not left his seat. It struck me he was laughing silently, but he did not look up. The crowd, after the manner of all crowds, stormed at the Goanese manager.

"What can I do? What shall I do?" wailed the unhappy little man. "They are bigger than I! They were greedy. They took!"

All those charges were evidently true and stated mildly. Coutlass rose to his feet.

"Gassharamminy!" he thundered, and his stomach stuck out over the table, it was so full of various drinks. "Why should we not take? Who isn't thirsty in this —— of a place? Who leaves good drink deserves to lose it!"

"What shall I do?" wailed the Goanese manager.

"Take the orders for drinks again," said the railway man, glancing up from his figures. "Bring the account to me."

The waiters ran to fill orders, and in came the guard, his face a blood-and-smudgy picture of discontent.

"Say," he yelled. "Ain't I goin' to get those two first-classes on trays?" He came and stood by us. "Did you ever 'ear the likes of it? They swear neither of 'em was out of the compartment. They call me a liar for askin' for my key back! They swear I never gave it to 'em, an' they never asked for it, an' their door was never locked, nor nothin'!"

He passed on to the railway man.

"I'll have to borry your key, sir. Mine's lost. Can't open doors until I get one from somewhere."

The railway man passed him his key with a bored expression and no remark.

"Don't forget that I want you presently," he ordered. "Be quick and get your own dinner."

"I'm in love with this ivory hunt!" Fred whispered to us across the table. "If she's sure our pockets are worth going through, I'm sure there's something to look for!"

"Are you sure the maid went through our things?" asked Yerkes.

"Quite. I left my shooting-jacket hanging on a hook. Everything was emptied out of the pockets on to the berth."

V

Our fathers praised the old accustomed things,
The privilege of chiefs, the village wall
Within whose circling dark Monumme* sings
O' nights of belly-full, and ease and all
They taught us we should prize and praise.
(Only of dearth and pestilence should be our fears)
And now behind us are the green, regretted days.
The water in the desert is our tears.
Then ye who at the water drink
Of freedom, oh, with pity think
On us, who face the desert brink
Your fathers entered willingly.

Our fathers mocked the might of the Unseen,
Teaching that only what we saw and felt
Was good to fight about—what aye had been,
Old-fashioned foods that their forefathers smelt,
Old stars each night illuming the old sky,
The warm rain softening ere women till the ground,
The soft winds singing—only ask not why
And now our weeping is the desert sound.
O ye who gorge the daily good,
Unquestioned heirs of what ye would,
Be thankful for the noble blood
Your fathers shed so willingly.

Our fathers taught us that the village good was best.
Later we learned the red, new tribal creed
That our place was the sun—night owned the rest
Unless their treasure profited our greed!
But now we gather nothing where our fathers sowed,
For harvest grim the vultures wait in rows
As, urged by greedier than us with gun and goad,
Yoked two by two, the slave *safari* goes.
O ye who from true judgment shrink,
Nor gentleness with courage link,
Be thoughtful when the cup ye drink
Your fathers spilled so willingly.

The Slave Gangs.

THE guard procured his trays at last, delivered them at a run, returned in a hurry and swallowed his own meal at a side-table. Then, with his mouth full, he reported for orders to the railway official, who was still checking figures. The room was beginning to grow empty. Coutlass and his Greek friend and the Goanese sat almost alone at the far end of the other table, finishing their pudding. I had not noticed until then that the guard was a singularly little man.

* Monumme (*Kiswahili*)—Lit. male—man in his prime.

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He stood very few inches taller than the seated official. I suppose that hitherto in some way his energy had increased his inches.

"Are there handcuffs in the caboose?"

"Yes, sir."

"Fetch them."

In spite of Brown of Lumbwa's protests, who wept at the notion of having to eat alone, we were in the act of settling our bills and going. But, mention of handcuffs suggesting entertainment, we lit cigars, and, imagining we stayed for love of him, Brown cooed at us.

"I've the darbies in my pocket, sir!"

I thought the guard looked more undersized than ever now that he returned. He would have made a fair-sized middleweight jockey.

"Tell that Greek—Coutlass his name is—to come here."

With his tongue stuck into his cheek and a wink at us, the guard obeyed.

"He says for you to go to ——, sir!" he reported after a moment's interview.

"Very well. Arrest him!"

"He'll need help," I interrupted. "My two friends and I——"

"Oh dear, no," said the official. "He is fully up to his work."

So we moved our chairs into position for a better view.

The guard advanced fox-terrierwise to within about six paces of Coutlass.

"Up with both your 'ands, Thermopylae!" he snapped. "Your bloomin' reckonin's come!"

Coutlass showed tobacco-stained teeth for answer, and his friends rutched their chairs clear of the table, ready for action. Yet they were taken unawares. With a terrier's speed the guard pounced on Coutlass, seized him by the hair and collar, hurled him—chair and all—under a side-table, and was on the far side of the table kicking his prostrate victim in the ribs before either the other Greek or the Goanese—likewise upset in the sudden onslaught—could gather themselves and interfere.

The Goanese was first on his feet. He hurled a soda-water bottle. The guard ducked, and the bottle smashed into splinters on the wall. Before the sound of smashing glass had died, the Goanese was down again, laid out by blows on the nose and jugular. Then, again, the guard kicked Coutlass, driving him back under the table from which he was trying to emerge on all fours.

The second Greek looked more dangerous. His face grew dark as the lips receded from his yellow teeth. He reached toward his boot but judged there were too many witnesses for knife-work and rushed in suddenly, yelling something in Greek to Coutlass as he picked up a chair to brain the guard with. He swung the chair, but the guard met it with another one, dodged him and tripped him as he passed.

In another second it was his turn to be kicked in the ribs until he yelled for mercy. An extra large dinner and all those assorted drinks in addition to what they had had in the train made neither man's wind good.

No mercy was forthcoming. He was kicked more and more violently until the need of crawling through the door to safety dawned on his muddled wits and he made his exit from the room snake-fashion. By that time Coutlass was on his feet again, and he, too, elected to force the issue with a chair. The guard sprang at the chair as Coutlass raised it, bore it down and drove his fist hard home into the Greek's right eye three times running.

" 'Ave you 'ad enough?" he demanded, making ready for another assault.

The Goanese had recovered and staggered to his feet to interfere, but Coutlass yielded.

"All right," he said. "Why should I fight a little man? I surrender to save bloodshed!"

"Put your 'ands out, then!"

Coutlass obeyed and was handcuffed ignominiously.

"Outside, you!"

A savage kick landed in exactly the place where the Goanese least expected and most resented it. He flew through the door as if the train had started, and then another kick jolted Coutlass.

"Forward, march! Left—right—left—right!"

With hands manacled in front and the inexorable bantam guard behind, Coutlass came and stood before the railway official, who at last condescended not to seem engrossed in his accounts.

" 'Ere he is, sir!"

"I suppose you know, my man, that I have magisterial powers on this railway?" said the official.

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Coutlass glowered but said nothing.

"This is not the first time you have made yourself a nuisance. You broke dishes the last time you were here."

"That is long ago," Coutlass objected. "That was on the day the place was first opened to the public. There was a celebration. Every one was drunk."

"You broke plates and refused to pay the damage."

"Officials were drunk. I saw them!"

"The damage amounted to seventeen rupees, eight annas."

"Gassharamminy! All the crockery from Mombasa to Nairobi isn't worth that amount! I shall not pay!"

"Now there's another bill for those drinks you and your friends stole when passengers' backs were turned. I saw you do it!"

"Why didn't you object at the time?" sneered Coutlass.

"Here is the bill: twenty-seven rupees, twelve annas. Total: forty-five rupees, four annas. You may make the manager a present of the odd sum for his injured feelings and call it an even fifty. Settle now or wait here for the down-train and go to jail in Mombasa!"

"Wait in this place?" asked Coutlass aghast.

"Where else? There'll be a down passenger-train in a week."

"I pay!" said the Greek with a hideous grimace.

"Take the irons off him, then."

The guard unlocked the handcuffs, and Coutlass began to fumble for a money-bag.

"Give me a receipt!" he demanded, thumbing out the money.

"You are the receipt!" said the official. "An Englishman would have been sent to jail with a fine and have paid the bill into the bargain. You're treated leniently because you can't be expected to understand decent behavior. You're expected to learn, however. Next time you will catch it hot!"

"All aboard!" called the guard cheerfully. "All aboard!"

"Tears, idle tears!" said Brown of Lumbwa, taking my arm and Fred's. "Thass too true—too true! They'd have jailed an Englishman—me f'rinstance. One little spree an' they'd put me in the fort! One li'l indishcresshion an' they'd jug me for shix months! Him they let go wi' a admonisshion! It's 'nother case o' Barabbas, an' a great shame, but you can't change the English. They're ingcorridgible! Brown o' Lumbwa's my name," he added by way of afterthought.

"Take advice and get under blankets afore you go to sleep, gents!" warned the guard. All windows were once more opened wide, and every one was panting. "A job on this 'ere line's a circus!" he grinned. "I'm lucky if there's only one fight afore Nairobi! 'Ave your blankets ready, gents! Cover yourselves afore you sleep!"

That sounded like a joke. The sweat poured from every one in streams. The hot hair cushions were intolerable. The dust, gathered from the desert, stirred and hung, and there was neither air to breathe nor coolness under all those overhanging mountains.

"Get under your blankets, gents!" advised the guard, passing down the train. And then the train started.

I HAD the upper berth opposite Brown's, where it was hottest of all because of the iron roof. Drunk though he was, I noticed that the first thing Brown did after we had hoisted him aloft was to dig among his blankets like a dog and make the best shift he could of crawling under them. With one blanket twisted about his neck and shoulders and the other tangled about his knees, he remarked to the roof that his name was Brown of Lumbwa and proceeded to sob himself to sleep.

The train's progress slowed and grew slower. The panting of the engine came back to us in savage blasts. We were climbing by curves and zigzags up the grim, dark wall of mountains. And, as we mounted, inch by inch, foot by foot, the air freshened and grew cooler—not really cool yet by a very Jacob's ladder of degrees, but delectable by comparison.

There was something peacefully exhilirating in the thought of rising from the red, dead level of that awful plain, littered with the bones of camels and the slaves whom men pinned into the yokes to perish or survive in twos.* As we mounted, foot by foot, we fell asleep. Later, as we

* It was the cheerful Arab rule never to release one slave from the yoke if the other failed on the journey, on the principle that then the stronger would be more likely to care for, encourage and drive the weaker.

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mounted higher, we shivered under blankets.

Nightmares come of such conditions, and I was no exception to the rule. In my dream, din followed crash and confusion until the engine's screaming at last awoke me. My blanket had fallen to the floor, and I was shivering from cold. I jumped down to recover it and realized it was dawn already. We were bowling along at a fine pace past green trees and undulating veld, and I wondered why the engine should keep on screaming like a thing demented. I knelt on Fred's berth to lean from the window and look ahead. We were going round a slight curve, and I could see the track ahead for miles.

Three hundred yards away a full-grown rhinoceros stood planted on the track, his flank toward us and his interest fixed on anything but trains. He was sniffing the cool morning, looking the other way.

"Wake up, fellows!" I yelled, and Fred and Will put their heads through the window beside me just in time to see the rhino take notice of the train at last. When the engine was fifty yards from him, he wheeled, took a short-sighted squint at it, sniffed, decided on war and charged. The engineer crowded on steam.

"He's a game enough sport!" chuckled Fred.

"He's a fool!" grinned Will.

He was both, for he never flinched. He struck the cow-catcher head-on and tried to lift it sky-high. The speed and weight of the engine sent him rolling over and over off the track, and the shock of the blow came backward along the train in thunder-claps as each car felt the check. The engineer whistled him a requiem, and a cheer went up from fifty heads, thrust out of windows. But he was not nearly done for.

He got up, spun round like a polo-pony to face the train, deliberately picked out level going and charged again. This time he hit the car we were in, and screams from the compartment behind us gave notice that Lady Saffren Waldon's maid was awake and looking through a window, too. He hit the running-board beside the car, crumpled it to match-wood, lifted the car an inch off the track, but failed to derail us. The car fell back on the metal with a clang, and the rhino recoiled sideways, to roll over and over again. This time the impetus sent him over the edge of a gully, and we did not doubt he was dead at the bottom of it.

The guard stopped the train and came running to see what the damage amounted to.

"Any gent got his rifle handy?" he shouted. "The train's ahead o' time. There's twenty minutes for sport!"

WE DIVED for our rifles, but Coutlass had his and was out on the track ahead of us, his eye a ghastly sight from the guard's overnight attentions, his face the gruesome color of the man who has eaten and drunk too much, but his undamaged eye ablaze and nothing whatever the matter with his enthusiasm.

"Give me a cartridge—a cartridge, somebody!" he yelled. "Gassharraminy! ——! He's not dead! I saw him kick as he went over the edge legs upwards! Give me one cartridge, and I'll finish him!"

By that time every male passenger was out on the track, some in night-shirts, some in shirt and pants, some with next-to-nothing at all on, but nearly all with guns. Somebody gave Coutlass a handful of cartridges that fitted his Mauser rifle, and he was off in the lead like a hero leading a forlorn hope, we after him.

We searched high and low but lost all trace of the rhino, and at the end of half an hour the engine's whistle called us back. There was blood and hair all over the engine—blood and hair on our car, but the rhino had been as determined in defeat as in attack, and, if he died of his wounds, he contrived to do it alone in dignity.

"That leaves Coutlass with six cartridges," said I, overtaking Fred. "Let's hope their owner asks for them back."

The owner did ask for them. He stood with his hand out by the door of the Greek's compartment.

"You didn't use those cartridges," he said.

"But I will!" sneered Coutlass. "Out of my way!"

He sprang for his door and slammed it in the man's face, and the other Greek and the Goanese jeered through the window. I caught sight of Hassan beside them, looking gray, as unhappy black men usually do. Yerkes saw him, too.

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"The cannibal's ours," he said, "supposing we want him and play our cards kind o' careful."

The next thing to delay the train was an elephant who walked the track ahead of us and, when the engine whistled, only put on speed. Hypnotized by the tracks that reached in parallel lines to the horizon, with trunk outstretched, ears up and silly tail held horizontally, he set himself the impossible task of leaving us behind. The more we cheered, the more the engine screamed, the fiercer and less dignified became his efforts; he reached a speed at times of fourteen or fifteen miles an hour, and it was not until, after many miles, he reached a culvert he dared not cross that he switched off at right-angles.

Realizing then at last that the train could not follow him to one side, he stood and watched us pass, red-eyed, blown and angry.

"Stop the train!" yelled Coutlass, brandishing his rifle as he climbed to the seat on the roof.

But the guard, likewise on the roof at his end of the train, gave no signal, and we sped on. We were already in the world's greatest game reserve, where no man might shoot elephant or any other living thing.

We began to pass herds of zebra, gnu and lesser antelope—more than a thousand zebra in one herd—ostriches in ones and twos—giraffes in scared half-dozens—rhinoceros—and here and there lone lions. Scarcely an animal troubled to look up at us, and only the giraffes ran.

Watching them, counting them, distinguishing the various breeds, we three grew enormously contented. Obviously we were in a land of good hunting.

To right and left of us—to north and south, that is—was wild mountain country, lonely and savage enough to arouse that unaccountable desire to go and see that lurks in the breast of younger sons and all true-blue adventurers. We got out a map and were presently tracing on it—with fingers that trembled from excitement—routes, marked with tiny, vague dots, leading toward lands marked "unexplored." There were vast plateaus on which not more than two or three white men had trodden and mountain ranges almost utterly unknown—some of them within sight of the line we traveled on.

If the map was anything to go by, we could reach Mount Elgon from Nairobi by any of three wild roads. Fred and I underscored the names of several places with a fountain-pen.

"And say!" said Yerkes. "Look out of the window! If we once got away into country like that, who could follow us?"

"But you can't get away!" said a weary voice from the upper berth. "I'm Brown of Lumbwa. That's my name, gents, and I know because I tried! Thought I was sound asleep, didn't you! Well, I weren't! Listen to me—what happens? You start off. They get wind of it. They send the police helter-skelter hotfoot after you—native police—no officer—Masai they are, an' I tell you those Masai can make their sixty miles a day when they're minded—an' no bones about it either! And, o' course—bein' ignorant, same as me, an' hot-headed an' eager—you treat them contumelious an' tip the Masai the office to go to ——. Which they do forthwith. They're so used to bein' told to go to —— by wishful wanderers that they scarcely trouble to wait for the words.

"Presently they draw a long breath an' go away again like smoke being blowed down-wind. An' you proceed onward, dreamin' dreams o' gold an' frankincense an' freedom."

"Well, what next?" said I, for he made a long pause, either for reminiscence or because of headache.

"Whisky next!" he answered. "I left a little for the morning, didn't I? I almost always do. Shake up the jug a little—no, no, you'll spill it! Pass it here! Ah-h-h-gug-gug!"

He finished what was left and tried to hurl the empty jug through the window but missed and smashed it against the woodwork.

" 'Ssapity!" he murmured. "Means bad luck, that does! Poor ole Brown o' Lumbwa—poor ole fella! Pick up the pieces, boys! Pick 'em up quick—might get some o' poor ole Brown's bad luck—cut yourselves or what not. Pick 'em up careful, now!"

We did, and it took ten minutes, for the splinters were scattered everywhere.

"Next time you do a thing like that, you shall get out and walk!" announced Fred.

"That 'ud be only my usual luck!" he answered mournfully. "But I was tellin' how you notify the Masai police to go to —— an' they oblige. It's the last obligin'

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anybody does for you. Every native's a bush-telegraph—every sleepy-seemin' one of 'em! They know tracks in an' out through the scrub that ain't on maps, an' they get by you day or night wi'out you knowin' it, an' word goes on ahead o' you—precedes you, as the sayin' is.

"You come to a village. You need milk, food, porters maybe, an' certainly inf'mation about the trail ahead. You ask. Nobody answers. They let on not to sling your kind o' lingo. Milk—never heard o' such stuff—cows in them parts don't give milk! Food? They're starving. It isn't overeating makes their bellies big; it's wind. Porters? All the young men are lame, an' the old uns too old, an' the middle 'uns too middle-aged—an' who ever heard of a native woman workin', anyhow?

"Who tills the *mtama* patch, then? It don't get tilled, or else the women only 'tend to it at tillin' time. Nobody works at anythin' about the time you come on the scene, for work ain't moral, pleasin' nor profitable, an' there you are! As for the trail ahead: lions an' cannibals are the two mildest kind o' calamities they guarantee you'll meet."

"You don't have to believe them," I argued. "No man in his senses would start in the first place without plenty of porters of his own——"

"Who never run away an' never, oh never go lame, o' course!" said Brown.

"Porters enough and to spare," I continued. "And food for a month or two——"

"How are you going to get away right under their noses with food for a month or two?" demanded Brown. "You've got to live off the country after a certain distance. The farther you go, the worse for you, for they'll sell you nothing and give you less. By and by your porters get tipped off by the natives of some village you spend a night at. You look for 'em next mornin', an' where are they? Gone! There are their loads an' no one to carry 'em! You've got to leave your loads an' return, an' the police you told so stric'ly to go to —— meet you with broad grins an' lead you to the Gov'ment office.

"There the collector—or, what's worse, the 'sistant c'lector—gives you a lecture on infamy an' the law of doin' as you'd be done by. You ask for your loads back, an' he laughs at you. An' that's all about it, excep' that, next time you happen to want a favor done you by Gov'ment, you get a lecture instead! No, you can't get away, an' it's no use tryin'! If you was Greeks, maybe—or Arabs, yes. Bein' English, the Indian Penal Code, which is white man's law in these parts, 'll get you sure!"

BROWN of Lumbwa sighed at recollection of his wrongs, turned over and went to sleep again. The train bowled along over high veld, cutting in half magnificent distances and stopping now and then at stations whose excuse for existence was unimaginable. We stopped at a station at last where the Hindu sold tea and biscuits. The train disgorged its passengers, and there was a scramble in the tiny ticket-office like the rush to get through turn-stiles at a football game at home, only that the crowd was more polyglot and less good-natured.

Coutlass, his Greek friend and the Goanese, being old travelers on that route, were out of the train first, first into the room and first supplied with tea and biscuits. Fred and I were nearly last. Brown of Lumbwa refused to leave his berth but lay moaning of his wrongs. I missed Yerkes in the scramble, and it was nearly half an hour before I caught sight of him again.

When Yerkes came in he was grinning, and his ears seemed to stick out more than usual, as they do when he is pleased with himself.

"Didn't I say fat Johnson was ours if we'd play our cards right?" he demanded.

"You mean Hassan?"

"He'd had no breakfast. He'd had no supper. He had no money. The Greeks took away what little money he did have on the pretext that he might buy a return ticket and desert them. I found him trying to beg a bite from a full-blooded Arab, and say! They're a loving lot. The Arab spat in his eye! I slipped him ten rupees for himself, and he's the gratefullest fat black man you ever set eyes on. There's a back door to this joint. He slipped round behind and bribed the babu to feed him on the rear step, me standing guard at the corner to keep Greeks at bay. He's back in the car now, playing possum."

"Let's trade him for Brown of Lumbwa," suggested Fred genially. "Call him into our car and kick Brown out!"

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"Trade nothing! I tell you the man is ours! Call him, and he'll bargain. Let him be, and, next time the Greeks ill-treat him, he'll come straight to us in hope we'll show him kindness."

"Swallow your tea quickly, Solomon!" Fred advised him. "There goes the whistle!"

It was fresh tea, just that minute made for him. Yerkes gulped down the scalding stuff and had to be thumped on the back, according to Fred. With eyes filled with water, he did not see what I did, and Fred was too busy guarding against counter-blows. The most public place and the very last minute always suited those two best for playing horse.

"Thought you said Johnson was asleep," said I.

"Possuming," said Yerkes. "Shamming sleep to fool the Greeks."

"Possuming, no doubt," I answered, "but the Greeks are on. He has just come scurrying out of Lady Saffren Waldon's compartment. The Greeks watched him and made no comment."

We piled into our own appointed place and sat for a while in silence.

"All right," said Yerkes at last, lighting his pipe. "I own I felt like quitting. I'll see it through now if there's no ivory and nothing but trouble! That dame can't thimblerig me!"

Fred got out his concertina. Just as Monty always played chess when his brain was busy, Fred likes to think to the strains of his infernal instrument. One could not guess what he was thinking about, but the wide world knew he was perplexed, and Lady Saffren Waldon in the next compartment must have suffered.

After a while he commenced picking out the tunes of comic songs and, before long, chanced on one that somebody in the front part of the train recognized and began to sing. In ten minutes after that he was playing accompaniments for a full train chorus, and the scared zebra and impala bolted to right and left, pursued by "Tararara-boom-de-ay," "Ting-a-ling-a-ling," and other non-Homeric dirges that in those days were dying an all-too-lingering death.

It was to the tune of "After the Ball" that the engine dipped head-foremost into a dry watercourse and brought the train to a jaw-jarring halt. Somebody—probably natives from a long way off, who needed fuel to cook a meal—had chopped out the hard-wood plate on which the beams of a temporary culvert rested. Time, white ants, gravity and luck had done the rest. It was a case thereafter of walk or wait.

So we walked and, not having been drunk overnight, reached Nairobi a long way ahead of Coutlass and his gang, whose shoes, among other matters, pinched them; and we were comfortably quartered in the one hotel several hours before the arrival of Lady Saffren Waldon and those folk who elected to wait for the breakdown gang and the relief train.

It was a tired hotel, conducted by a tired once-missionary person. Nairobi itself was a tired-looking township of small, parallel roofs of unpainted corrugated iron, with one main street, more than a mile long, and perhaps a dozen side-streets, varying in length from fifty feet to half a mile.

He must have been a very tired surveyor who pitched on that site and marked it as railway headquarters on his map. He could have gone on and found within five miles two or three sightlier, healthier spots. But perhaps he had fever and was cross. At any rate, there stood Nairobi, with its "tin-town" for the railway underlings, its "tin" sheds for the repair shops, its big "tin" station buildings and its string of pleasant-looking bungalows on the only high ground, where the Government nabobs lived.

The hotel was a square frame building with a veranda in front and its laundry hanging out behind. Having marched fastest, we obtained the best room and the only bath, but next-door neighbors could hear our conversation through the thin board wall as easily as if there had been no division at all.

But, as it happened, neither Coutlass and his gang nor Lady Saffren Waldon and her maid were put next to us on either side.

We all went to the post-office on the white man's habitual hunt for mail that we knew was non-existent. And I had the first adventure.

I WALKED away from the post-office alone, trying to puzzle out by myself the meaning of Lady Saffren Waldon's friendship with the Germans and her probable connection with

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Georges Coutlass and his riffraff. I had not gone far down a grassy track that they had told me led toward a settlement—when something, not a sound nor a smell and certainly not sight, for I was staring at the ground, caused me to look up. My foot was raised for a forward step, but what I saw then made me set it down again.

To my right front, less than ten yards away, was a hillock about twice my own height. To my left front, about twelve yards away, was another, slightly higher; and the track passed between them. On the right-hand hillock stood a male lion, full-maned, his forelegs well apart and the dark tuft on the end of his tail appearing every instant to one side or the other as he switched it cat-fashion. He was staring down at me with a sort of scandalized interest, and there was nothing whatever for me to do but to stare at him. I had no weapon.

One spring and a jump, and I was his meat. To run was cowardice as well as foolishness, the one because the other. And, without pretending to be able to read a lion's thoughts, I dare risk the assertion that he was puzzled what to do with me. I could very plainly see his claws coming in and out of their sheaths, and—what with that, and the switching tail, and the sense of impotence—I could not take my eyes off him. So I did not look at the other hillock at first.

But a sound like that a cat makes calling to her kittens, only greatly magnified, made me glance to the left in a hurry. I think that up to that moment I had not had time to be afraid, but now the goose-flesh broke all over me, and the sensation up and down my spine was of melting helplessness.

On the left-hand hillock a lioness stood looking down with much more intense and curious interest. She looked from me to her mate, and from her mate to me again, with indecision that was no more reassuring than her low, questioning growl.

I do not know why they did not spring on me. Surely, no two lions ever contemplated easier quarry. No victim in the arena ever watched the weapons of death more helplessly. I suppose my hour had not come. Perhaps the lions, well used to white men who attacked on sight with long-range weapons, doubted the wisdom of experiments on something new.

The lioness growled again. Her mate purred to her with an up-rising reassuring note that satisfied her and sent my heart into my boots. Then he turned, sprang down behind the hillock, and she followed. The next I saw of them, they were running away like dogs, jumping low bushes and heading for jungle on the near horizon faster than I had imagined lions could travel.

That ended my desire for further exercise and solitude. I made for the hotel as fast as fear of seeming afraid would let me and spent fifteen aggravating minutes on the veranda trying to persuade Fred Oakes that I had truly seen lions.

"Hyenas!" he said with the air of an old hunter, to which he was quite entitled but that soothed me all the less for that.

"More likely jackals," said Yerkes—and he was just as much as Fred entitled to an opinion.

While I was asserting the facts with increasing anger, and they were amusing themselves with a hundred-and-one ridiculous reasons for disbelieving me, Lady Saffren Waldon came. She had, as usual, attracted to herself able assistance; a settler's ox-cart brought her belongings from the station, and she and her maid rode in hammocks, borne by porters impressed from heaven knew where.

She left to her maid the business of quarreling about accommodations—there was little left to choose from, and all was bare and bad—dismissed the obsequious settler and his porters with perfunctory thanks that left him no excuse for lingering. Then she came along the veranda straight toward us, with the smile of old acquaintance and such an air of being perfectly at ease that surprize was disarmed and the rudeness we all three intended died still-born.

"What do you think of the country?" she asked. "Men like it, as a rule. Women detest it, and who can blame them? No comforts—no manners—no companionship—no meals fit to eat—no amusement! Have you killed anything or anybody yet? That always amuses a man!"

We rose to make room for her, and I brought her a chair. There was nothing else one could do. There is almost no twilight in that part of East Africa; until dark there is scarcely a hint that the day is waning. She sat with us for twenty or thirty minutes making small talk, her maid watching us from a window above, until

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the sun went down with almost the suddenness of gas turned off. In a moment we could scarcely see one another's faces.

Then came the proprietor to the door, with his best ex-missionary air of knowledge of all earth's ways, their reason and their trend.

"All in!" he called. "All inside at once! No guest is allowed after dark on the veranda! All inside! Supper presently!"

"Pah!" remarked Lady Saffren Waldon, rising. "What is it about some men that makes one's blood boil? I suppose we must go in."

She came nearer until she stood between the three of us, so close that I could see her diamond-hard eyes and hear the suppressed breathing that I suspected betrayed excitement.

"I must speak with you three men! Listen! I know this place! The rooms are unspeakable—not a bedroom that isn't a megaphone, magnifying every whisper! There is only one suitable place—the main dining-room. The proprietor leaves the oil-lamp burning in there all night. People go to bed early; they prefer to drink in their bedrooms because it costs less than treating a crowd! I shall provide a light supper, and my maid shall lay the table after everybody else is gone up-stairs. Then come down and talk with me. It's important. Be sure and come!"

She did not wait for an answer but led the way into the hotel. There was no hall. The door led straight into the dining-room, and the noisy crowd within, dragging chairs and choosing places at the two long tables, made further word with her impossible, even if she had not hurried up-stairs to her room.

"What do you make of her? Isn't she the limit?"

The words were scarcely out of Yerkes' mouth when a roar that made the dishes rattle broke and echoed and rumbled in the street outside. The instant it died down, another followed it—then three or four—then a dozen all at once. There came the pattering of heavy feet like the sound of cattle coming homeward. Yet no cattle—no buffaloes—ever roared that way.

"Now you know why I ordered you all inside," grinned the ex-missionary owner of the place.

"Lions?" I asked, hating to play interlocutor to that smug host, yet curious beyond power to resist.

"CERTAINLY, they're lions! Did you think you were dreaming? Are you glad you came in when I called you? Would you rather go out again now? Make a noise like a herd of cattle, don't they. That's because they're bold. They don't care who hears them! The day is ours. It used to be theirs, but the white man has come and broken up their empire. The night is still theirs. They're reveling in it! They're boasting of it!

"Every single night they come swaggering through like this just after sunset. They'll come again just before dawn, roaring the same way. You'll hear them. They'll make you, all right. No trouble in this hotel about getting guests down-stairs for early breakfast!"

"I'll get my rifle and settle the hash of one or two of them before I eat supper!" announced Yerkes, turning away to make good his words.

But the proprietor seized him by the arm.

"Don't be foolish! I never allow such foolishness at my place. A party up-street fired from the windows. Couldn't see very well in the dark, but wounded two or three lions. What happened, eh? Why the whole pack of lions laid siege to the house! They broke into the stable and killed three horses, a donkey and all the cows and sheep. There weren't any shutters on the house windows—nothing but glass. It wasn't long before a young lion broke a window, and in no time there were three full-grown ones into the house after him.

"They injured one man so severely that he died next day. They only shot two of the lions that got inside. The other two got safely away, and since that time people here have known enough not to interfere with them except by daylight! They'll do no harm to speak of unless you fire and enrage them. They'll kill the stray dogs, or any other animal they find loose—and Heaven help the man they meet! But the place to be after 6 P.M. in Nairobi is indoors. And it's the place to stay until after sunrise. Hear them roar! Aren't they magnificent? Listen!"

The noise that twenty or thirty lions can make, deliberately bent on making it and roaring all at once, is unbelievable. They

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throw their heads up and glory in strength of lungs until thunders take second place and the listener knows why not the bravest, not the most dangerous, of beasts has managed to impose the fable of his grandeur on men's imagination.

We were summoned to the table by the din of Georges Coutlass rising to new heights of gallantry.

"Gassharrimminy!" he shouted, thumping with a scarred fist. With a poultice on his eye he looked like a swashbuckler home from the war, and, as he had not troubled to shave himself, the effect was heightened. "What sort of company sits when a titled lady enters?" He seized a big spoon and rapped on the board with it. "Blood of an onion! Rise, every one!"

Everybody rose, although there were men in the room in no mind to be told their duty by a Greek. Lady Saffren Waldon walked to a place near the head of the table with a chilling bow. As usual, when night and the yellow lamplight modified merciless outlines, she looked lovely enough.

But she lacked the royal gift of seeming at home with the vulgar herd. She could make men notice her—serve her up to a certain point—and feel that she was the center of interest wherever she might choose to be; but, because she was everlastingly on guard, she lacked the power to put mixed company at ease.

Only the ex-missionary at the head of the table seemed to consider himself socially qualified to entertain her. She was at no pains to conceal contempt for him.

"You honor my poor hotel!" he assured her.

"It is certainly a very poor hotel," she answered.

"Do you expect to remain long, may I ask?"

"What right have you to ask me questions? Tell that native to go away from behind my chair. My own maid will wait on me."

Whether purposely or not, she cast such a chill on the company that even Georges Coutlass subsided within himself and, though he ate like a ravening animal, did not talk. Almost the only conversation was between the owner and the native servants, who waited at table abominably and were noisily reprimanded and argued back. Each reprimand increased their inefficiency and insolence. Natives detest a fussy, noisy white man.

Bad food, indifferent cooking and no conversation worthy of the name produced gloom that drove every one from table as soon as possible. Even the proprietor, with insatiable curiosity exuding from him but no spirit for forcing issues, departed to a sanctum of his own up somewhere under the roof. The boys cleared the tables. The smell of food spread itself and settled slowly. A half-breed butler served countless orders of drinks on trays and sent them up-stairs to bedrooms. Presently we three sat alone in the long, bare room.

"Shall we wait for her?" I asked. "Haven't we had enough of her?"

My own vote would have been in favor of going up-stairs and leaving her to her own devices. I could see that Fred was afire with curiosity but guessed that Yerkes would agree with me. However, the point was settled for us by the arrival of her maid, who smiled with unusual condescension and produced from a basket an assortment of drinks, nuts, cigarets and sandwiches. She spread them on the table and went away again.

We sat and smoked for an hour after that, imagining every moment that Lady Saffren Waldon would be coming. Whenever we yawned in chorus and rose to go up-stairs, a footstep seemed to herald her arrival.

At last we really made up our minds to go to bed; and then she really came, appearing at the bend in the stairs just as I set my foot on the lower step. She was dressed in a lacy silk negligée and took pains this time to appear gracious.

"I waited until I felt sure we would not be disturbed," she said smiling. "Won't you come and sit down?" She made a sign toward the wine and sandwiches and offered us cigarets of a sort I had never seen. Without feeling exactly like flies in a spider's web, we were nervous as schoolboys.

"What do you want with us?" asked Yerkes at last.

She laughed and took a cigaret.

"Don't let us talk too loud. You three men are after the Tippoo Tib ivory. So is the Sultan of Zanzibar. So is the German Government. So am I!"

She gave that statement time to do its own

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work and smoked a while in silence. The strength of her position and our weakness lay in there being three of us. Any one of us might let drop an ill-considered word that would commit the others. I think we all felt that, for we sat and said nothing.

"You answer her, Fred," I said at last, and Yerkes nodded agreement.

So Fred got up and sat on the other side of the table, where we could see his face and he ours.

"You haven't answered Mr. Yerkes' question," he said. "What do you want with us, Lady Saffren Waldon?"

"I want an understanding with you. We all know you know where the ivory is. Lord Montdidier is not the man to connect himself with any wild-goose chase. We don't pretend to know how you came by the secret or why he has gone to London, but we are sure you know it—perfectly sure, and for five or six reasons. We are willing to buy the secret from you at your own price."

"Who are 'we'?" asked Fred pointedly, helping himself to nuts.

"The German Government, the Sultan of Zanzibar and myself."

Fred smiled.

"Between you, you probably could pay," he remarked.

"I will tell you a few hard facts," she said, "now that the ice is broken. You will never be allowed to make full use of your own secret. You have arrived at an inopportune moment—for you and for us. Our plans have been on foot a long time. Our search has been systematic, and it is a mathematical certainty we shall find what we look for in time. We do not propose to let new arrivals on the scene spoil all our plans and disappoint us just because they happen to have information.

"If you go ahead, you will be watched like mice whom cats are after. If you find the ivory, you will be killed before you can make the discovery known!"

"We seem up against it, don't we?" smiled Will Yerkes.

"You are. But you can save us trouble if you will. Name your price. Tell me your secret. Go your way. If your story proves true, you shall be paid by draft on London."

"Are you overlooking the idea," asked Fred, "that we might tell the secret to the British Government and be contented with our ten per cent. commission?"

"I am not. You are expressly warned against any such foolishness. In the first place, you will be killed at once if you dare. In the second place, how do you know the British Government would pay you ten per cent.?"

"I've had dealings with the English," laughed Fred.

"Bah! Do you think this is Whitehall? Do you think the officials here are proof against temptation? When I tell you that in Whitehall itself I can bribe two officials out of three, perhaps you'll understand me when I say that all these people have their price. And the price is low. Tell them where the ivory is—lead them to it—and they'll swear they found it themselves so as to keep the commission themselves! And as for you—you three—" She sneered with the most sardonic, thin-lipped smile I ever saw. "There are lions out here and buffalo, snakes, fevers, native uprisings—more ways of being rid of you than by choking you to death with butter!"

"Do you suppose," asked Fred, "that Lord Montdidier has no influence in London, and that he——"

"I know he had influence. I should have told you first, perhaps. Lord Montdidier was murdered on board ship. A telegram reached Mombasa yesterday at 10 A.M. from up-coast, saying that the body of an unknown Englishman had been picked up at sea by an Arab *dhow*, with the face too badly eaten by fish to be recognizable. You may take it from me, that is Lord Montdidier's corpse."

THE calm announcement was intended to surprize us, and it did, but the result surprized her.

"You she-devil!" said Yerkes. "If you and your gang have murdered that fine fellow, I'll turn the tables on you! You go up-stairs, you hussy, and pray he isn't dead! Pray that corpse may prove to be some one's else! If he's dead, I'll guarantee you it's the worst day's work you ever had a hand in! Go up-stairs!"

He flung away the cigaret she had given him and kicked his chair away.

"Sit down, you young fool!" she said. "Don't make all that noise!"

But Will had none of the respect for titles acquired by marriage that made most men an easy mark for her.

"Leave the room!" he ordered. "Go

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away from us! Just you hope that's a lie about Monty, that's all!"

"Sit down!" she repeated. "I admit I am a little previous. I invented the story. Sit down and be sensible! That is what will happen to him unless you three men get religion!"

But Yerkes began to pace the floor noisily, stopping to glare at her each time he turned.

"Is there any sense in protracting the scene?" asked Fred.

"No," she admitted. "I see you are too hot-headed to be reasoned with. But it makes little difference! Fever—animals—climate — sun — flood — accident — natives—there are excuses in plenty—explanations by the dozen! I will say good night, then—and good-by!"

"Yes, good-by!" growled Yerkes, facing her with his back to the stairs. "You take us for men with a price, do you?"

"All men have a price," she smiled bitterly. "Only it is no use offering flowers to pigs! We must treat pigs another way—pigs and young fools! And fools old enough to know better!" she added with a nod toward Fred, who bowed to her in mock abasement—too politely, I thought.

Will got out of her way, and she went up-stairs with the manner of an empress taking leave of subjects. Fred swept her food and wine from the table and stowed it in a corner, and we sat down at the table again.

"The whole thing's getting ridiculous," he said.

"Why don't we hunt up some official in the morning," I proposed, "and simply expose her?"

"No use," said Will. "She never followed us up here and tried that game without being sure of her pull. Besides—what kind of tale could we tell without letting on we're after the ivory? I vote we see the game through to a finish."

"Good!" said Fred. "I agree!"

"The only clue we've got," said I, "is Courtney's advice about Mount Elgon."

"And what Coutlass said in Zanzibar about German East," added Yerkes.

"Tell you what," said Fred, rapping the table excitedly. "Instead of falling foul of this Government by slipping over the dead-line, why not run down to German East—pretend to search for the stuff down there—and go from German East direct to Mount Elgon, giving 'em all the slip? Who's got the map?"

"It's up-stairs," I said. "I'll fetch it."

There was nothing like silence in the rooms above. Men were smoking and drinking in one another's rooms. Some doors were open to make conversation easier across the landing, and nobody was asleep. But I was surprized to see Georges Coutlass leaning against the doorpost of the room he shared with the other Greek and the Goanese, obviously on guard, but against whom and on whose behalf it was difficult to guess.

"Are you off to bed?" he asked, piercing me with his unbandaged eye. "Why don't the others go, too?"

It dawned on me what he was after.

"Take the wine if you want it," I said. "None of us will prevent you."

He went down-stairs in his stocking feet, leaving his own door wide. I glanced in. The other Greek and the Goanese were asleep. Hassan lay on the floor on a mat between their cots. He looked up at me. I did not dare speak, but I smiled at him as friendly as I knew how and made a gesture I hoped he would interpret as an invitation to come and attach himself to our party. Then I hurried on, for Coutlass was coming back with a bottle of wine in each hand.

I was five minutes in our bedroom. In a minute I knew what had happened. We had left the door locked, but the lock was a common one; probably the keys of other doors fitted it, and there was not one thing in the room placed exactly where we left it. Everything was more or less in place, but nothing quite.

I returned empty-handed down-stairs, locking the door again behind me.

"Listen, you chaps!" I said. "While we waited for that woman, she and her maid went through our things again!"

"How d'you know it was she?" asked Fred.

"No mistaking the scent she uses. Where's our money?"

"Here in my pocket."

"Good. The map's gone, though!"

Will showed his teeth in the first really happy smile for several days.

"Good enough!" he said. "Let's go to bed now. I'll bet you my share of the ivory they're poring over the map with a magnifying glass! D'you remember the

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various places we underscored? They'll think it's a cryptogram and fret over it all night! Come on—come to bed!"

VI

Noah was our godfather, and he pitched and calked a ship
With stable-room for two of each and fodder for the trip,
Lest, when the flood made sea of earth, the animals should die;
And two by two he stalled us till the wrath of God was by.
But who in the name of the Pentateuch can the pale-face people be
Who ha' done on the plains of Africa more than he did at sea?

A million hoofs once drummed the dust; (Kongoni* lead the way!)
From river-pool to desert-lick we thundered in array
Until the dark-skin people came with tube and smoke and shot,
Hunting and driving and killing and leaving the meat to rot.
And we didn't know who the hunters were, but we saw the herds grow thin
That used to drum the dust-clouds up with thousand-footed din.

We were few when the pale-face people came—scattered and few and afraid.
Fewer were they, but they brought the law, and the dark-skin men obeyed.
The pale-face people drew a line that none by dark or day
Might cross with fell intent to hunt, capture or drive or slay.
But who can the pale-face people be with red-meat appetites
Who ruled anew what Noah knew—that animals have rights?
And now in the Athi Game Reserve—in a million-acre park—
A million creatures graze who went by twos into the Ark.
We sleep o' nights without alarm (Kongoni prick your ear!)
And barring the leopard and lion to watch, and ticks, we've nought to fear,
Zebra, giraffe and waterbuck, rhino and ostrich, too—
But who can the pale-face people be who know what Noah knew?

The Song of the Great Game Reserve.

THE lions awoke us a little before dawn as the proprietor had promised. They seemed to have had bad hunting, for their boastfulness was gone. They came in twos and threes, snarling, only roaring intermittently—in a hurry because the hated daylight would presently reverse conditions and put them at disadvantage.

I grew restless and got up and sat for a while by the window. So it happened I caught sight of Hassan, very much afraid of lions but obviously more afraid of being seen from the hotel. He was sneaking along as close to the house as he could squeeze, and, for no better reason than that I was curious and unoccupied, I slipped out of the house and followed him.

Once clear of the hotel, he ran up-street in the direction of the bazaar. If he saw me at all, he must have mistaken me for a settler or one of the Nairobi officials, for he seemed perfectly sure of himself and took no pains whatever to throw pursuers off the track.

It soon became evident that he was making for an imposing group of tents on the outskirts of the town, and it became my turn to take precautions. So I turned my back on him, walked to where a sort of fold in the ground enabled me to get down unseen into a shallow *nullah* and went along that at right-angles to Hassan's course until I reached the edge of some open jungle, about half a mile from the tents. I noticed that it came to an end at a spot about three hundred yards to the rear of the tents; so I worked my way along its outer edge and approached the encampment from behind.

The camp was awake now. There were ten tents, all facing one way. One tent housed a mule, and the rest were for native servants and stores. The camp was tidy and clean—obviously belonging to some one of importance. Fires were alight. Breakfast was being cooked and smelled most uncommonly appetizing in that chill morning air. Boys were already cleaning boots and a saddle and other things. There was an air of discipline and trained activity, and from the central tent came the sound of voices.

I don't know why, but I certainly did not expect to hear English. So the sound of English, spoken with a foreign accent, brought me to a standstill. I listened to a few words and made no further bones about eavesdropping. Circumstances favored me. The boys had seen I was carrying a rifle and was therefore a white man of importance; so they did not question my right to approach.

The tent with the mule in it and the two

* Kongoni—a species of large buck, whose special mission in life appears to be to foil the hunter by keeping watch for all the other game. Whenever the Kongoni runs the rest all up and follow him.

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store tents were on the right, pitched in a triangle. I passed between them up to the very pegs of the central tent, from which the voices came, and discovered I was invisible, unless some one should happen to come around a corner. I decided to take my chance of that.

The first thing that puzzled me was why a German—for it was a perfectly unmistakable German accent—should need to talk English to a native who was certainly familiar with both Arabic and Kiswahili. When I heard the German addressed as Bwana Schillingschen, I wondered still more, for from all accounts that individual could speak more native tongues than most people knew existed.

It did not occur to me at the time that if he wished not to be understood by his own crowd of boys he must either speak German or English and that Hassan would almost certainly know no German.

"A good thing you came to me!" I heard. The accent was clumsy for a man so well versed in tongues. "Yes, I will give you money at the right time. Tell me no lies! You say there are three of the fools?"

"Yes, *Bwana*. There were four, but one going home—big lord gentleman, him having black m'stache, gone home."

There was no mistaking Hassan's voice. No doubt he could speak his mother tongue softly enough, but, in common with a host of other people, he seemed to imagine that to make himself understood in English he must shout.

"Why did he go home?"

"I don't know, *Bwana*."

"Did they quarrel?"

"*Sijui*."*

"Don't you dare say '*sijui*' to me!"

"Maybe they quarrel—maybe not. They all quarreling with Lady Saffunwardo—staying in same hotel, Tippoo Tib one time his house—she wanting maybe go with him to London. He saying no. Others saying no. All very angry each with other an' throwing *bwana masikini*, Greek man, down hotel stairs."

"What had he to do with it?"

"Two Greek man an' one Goa all after ivory, too. She—Lady Saffunwardo—afterward promising pay them three if they come along an' do what she tell 'em. They agreeing quick! Byumby Tippoo Tib hearing bazaar talk an' sending me along, too. She refuse to take me, all because German consul man knowing me formerly and not making good report, but Greek *bwana* he not caring and say to me to come along. Greek people very bad! No food—no money—nothing but swear an' kick an' call bad names—an' drunk nearly all the time!"

"What makes you think these three men know where the ivory is?"

It was the voice of a man very used to questioning natives—self-assertive but calm—going straight to the point each time.

"They having map. Map having marks on it."

"How do you know?"

"She—Lady Saffunwardo—go in their bed-room, stealing it last night."

"Did you see her take it?"

"Yes, *Bwana*."

"Did you see the marks on it?"

"No, *Bwana*."

"Then how do you know the marks were on it? Now, remember, don't lie to me!"

"Coutlass, him Greek man, standing on stairs keeping watch. Them three men you call fools all sitting in dining-room waiting because they thinking she come presently. She send maid to their room. Maid, fool woman, upset everything, finding nothing. 'No,' she say, 'no map—no money—no anything in here!' An' Lady Saffunwardo she very angry an' say, 'Come out o' there! Let me look!' And Lady Saffunwardo going in, but maid not coming out, an' they both search.

"Then Lady Saffunwardo saying all at once, 'Here it is! Didn't you see this?' An' the maid answering, 'Oh, that! That nothing but just ordinary pocket-map! That not it!' But Lady Saffunwardo she opening the map an' make little scream an' say, 'Idiot! This is it! Look! See! See the marks!' So, *Bwana*, I then knowing must be marks on map!"

"Good. What did she do with it?"

"*Sijui*."

"I told you not to dare say '*sijui*' to me!"

"How should I know, *Bwana*, what she doing with it?"

"Could you steal it?"

"No, *Bwana!*"

"Why not?"

"You not knowing that woman. No man daring steal f'm her. She very terrible!"

*Sijui—(Kiswahili)—I don't know: the most aggravating word in Africa, except perhaps *bado kidogo*, which means "presently"—"by-and-by"—lit. "in a little while."

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"If I offered you a hundred rupees could you steal it?"

"*Sijui, Bwana.*"

"I told you not to use that word!"

"*Bwana,* I——"

"Could you steal it?"

"Maybe."

"That is no answer!"

"Say that again about hundred rupees!"

"I will give you a hundred rupees if you bring me that map and it proves to be what you say."

"I go. I see. I try. Hundred rupees very little money!"

"It's all you'll get, you black rascal! And you know what you'll get if you fail! You know me, don't you? You understand my way? Steal that map and bring it here, and I shall give you a hundred rupees. Fail, and you shall have a hundred lashes and what Ahmed and Abdullah and Seydi got in addition! The hundred lashes first and the ant-hill afterward! You're not fool enough to think you can escape me, I suppose?"

"No, *Bwana!*"

"Then go and get the map!"

"But afterward, what then? She very *gali** woman."

"Nonsense! Steal the map and bring it here to me. Then I've other work for you. Are you a renegade Mohammedan?"

"No, *Bwana!* No, no! Never! I'm good Moslem."

"Very well. Back to your old business with you! Preach Islam up and down the country. Go and tell all the tribes in British territory that the Germans are coming soon to establish an empire of Islam in Africa! Good pay and easy living! Does that suit you?"

"Yes, *Bwana.* How much pay?"

"I'll tell you when you bring the map. Now be going!"

HASSAN went, after a deal of polite salaaming. Then boys began bringing the German's breakfast, and, unless I chose to confess myself an eavesdropper, it became my business to be in the tent ahead of them. So I strode forward as if just arrived and purposely tripped over a tent-rope, stumbling under the awning with a laugh and an apology.

"Who are you?" demanded the German, without rising.

He had the splay shovel beard described to us in Zanzibar—a big, dark man, sitting in the doorway of a tent all hung with guns, skins and antlers. He was in nightshirt and trousers—bare feet—but with a helmet on the back of his head.

"A visitor," I answered, "staying at the hotel—out for a morning shot at something—had no luck—got nothing—saw your tents in the distance and came out of curiosity to find out who you are."

"My name is Professor Schillingschen," he answered, still without getting up.

There was no other chair under the awning; so I had to remain standing. I told him my name, hoping that Hassan had either not done so already or else that he might have so bungled the pronunciation as to make it unrecognizable. I detected no sign of recognition on Schillingschen's face.

The boys reached the tent with his breakfast, and one of them dragged a chair from inside the tent for me. I sat down on it without waiting for the professor to invite me.

"I'm tired," I said untruthfully, minded to refuse an invitation to eat but interested to see whether he would invite me or not.

"Have you any friends at the hotel?" he asked, looking up at me darkly under the bushiest eyebrows I ever saw.

"I've got friends wherever I go," I answered. "I make friends."

"Are you going far?" he demanded, holding out a foot for his boy to pull a stocking on.

"That depends," I said.

"On what?"

"On whether I get employment."

I said that at random, without pausing to think what impression I might create. He pulled the nightshirt off over his head, throwing the helmet to the ground, and sat like a great hairy gorilla for the boy to hang day-clothes on him. He had the hairiest breast and arms I ever saw, hung with lumpy muscles that heightened his resemblance to an ape.

"I might give you work," he said presently, beginning to eat before the boy had finished dressing him.

"I want to travel," I said. "If I could find a job that would take me up and down the length and breadth of this land, that would suit me finely."

*Gali—(Kiswahili) same as Hindustani kali—cruel, hard, fierce, terrible.

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"That is the kind of man I want," he said, eyeing me keenly. "I have a German, but I need an Englishman. Do you speak native languages?"

"Scarcely a word."

To my surprize he nodded approval at that answer.

"I have parties of natives traveling all over the country gathering folk-lore and ethnographical particulars. But they get into a village and sit down for whole weeks at a time, drawing pay for doing nothing. I need an Englishman to go with them and keep them moving."

"All well and good," I said, "but I understand the Government is not in favor of white men traveling about at random."

"But I am known to the Government," he answered. "I have been accorded facilities because of my professional standing. Have you references you can give me?"

"No," I said. "No references."

I thought that would stump him, but on the contrary he looked rather pleased.

"That is good. References are too frequently evidence of back-stairs influence."

All this while he kept eyeing me between mouthfuls. Whenever I seemed to look away, his eyes fairly burned holes in me. Whenever food got in his beard—which was frequently—he used the napkin more as a shield behind which to take stock of me than as a means of getting clean again. By the time his breakfast was finished, his beard was a beastly mess, but he probably had my features from every angle fixed indelibly in his memory. The sensation was that I had been analyzed and card-indexed.

"I pay good wages," he remarked, and then he stuck his face, beard and all, into the basin of warm water his boy had brought. "Where did you get that rifle?" he demanded, spluttering and combing the beard out with his fingers.

It was on the tip of my tongue to say "at Zanzibar," but, as that might have started him on a string of questions as to how I came to that place and whom I knew there, I temporized.

"Oh, I bought it from a man."

"That is no answer!" he retorted.

If I had been possessed of much inclination to play deep games and match wits with big rascals, I suppose I would have answered him civilly and there and then learned more of his purpose. But I was not respectful of his claim to superiority. The German type of super-education never did impress me, and it annoyed me to have to lie to him.

"It's all the answer you'll get!" said I.

"Where is your license for it?" he growled.

The game began to amuse me.

"None of your business!" I answered.

"How long have you been in the country?"

"Since I came," I said.

"And you have no license! You have been out shooting. A lucky thing you came to my camp and not to some other man's! The game-laws are very strict!"

He spoke then to a boy who was standing behind me, giving him very careful directions in a language of which I did not know one word. The boy went away.

"The last man who went shooting near Nairobi without a license," he said, "tried to excuse himself before the magistrate by claiming ignorance of the law. He was fined a thousand rupees and sentenced to six months in jail!"

"Very severe!" I said.

"They are altogether too severe," he answered. "I hope you have killed nothing. It is good you came first to me. You would better stand that rifle over here in the corner of my tent. To walk back to the hotel with it over your shoulder would be dangerous."

"I've taken bigger chances than that," said I.

"If you have shot nothing, then it is not so serious," he said, disappearing behind a curtain into the recesses of his tent.

He stayed in there for about ten minutes. I had about made up my mind to walk away when four of his boys approached the tent from behind and one of them cried—

"*Bodi!*"

The boy to whom he had given directions across my shoulder was not among them.

They threw a buck down near my feet, and he came out from the gloomy interior and stared at it. He asked them questions rapidly in the native tongue, and they answered, pointing at me.

"They say you shot it," he told me, stroking his great beard alternately with either hand.

"Then they lie!" I answered.

"Let me see that rifle!" he said, reaching out an enormous freckled fist to take it.

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I saw through his game at last. It would have been the easiest thing in the world to extract a cartridge from the clip in the magazine and claim afterward that I had fired it away. Evidently he proposed to get me in his power, though for just what reason he was so determined to make use of me rather than any one else was not so clear.

"So I shot the buck, did I?" I asked.

"Those four natives say they saw you shoot it."

"Then it's mine?"

He nodded.

"It's heavy," I said, "but I expect I can carry it."

I TOOK the buck by the hind legs and swung myself under it. It weighed more than a hundred pounds, but the African climate had not had time enough to sap my strength or destroy sheer pleasure in muscular effort.

"What's mine's my own!" I laughed. "You gave me something to eat after all! Good day and good riddance!"

The boys tried to prevent me from carrying the buck away.

"Come back!" growled the professor. "I will take responsibility for that buck and save you from punishment. Bring it back! Lay it down!"

But I continued to walk away; so he ordered his boys to take the carcass from me. I laid it down and threatened them with my butt end. He brought his own rifle out and threatened me with that. I laughed at him, bade him shoot if he dared, offered him three shots for a penny and ended by shouldering the buck again and walking off.

Meat was cheap in Nairobi in those days; so the owner of the hotel was not so delighted as I expected. He reprimanded me for being late for breakfast and told me I was lucky to get any. Fred and Will had waited for me, and, while we ate alone and I told them the story of my morning's adventure, a police officer in khaki uniform tied up his mule outside and clattered in.

"Whose is that buck hanging outside the kitchen?" he demanded.

"There's some doubt about it," I said. "I've been accused of being the owner."

"Then you're the man I want. The court sits at nine. You'd better be there, or you'll be fetched!"

He placed in my hand what proved to be a summons to appear before the district court that morning on the charge of carrying an unregistered rifle and shooting game without a license. Two native policemen he had with him took down the buck from the hook outside the kitchen door and carried it off as evidence.

We finished our breakfast in great contentment and strode off arm-in-arm to find the court-house, feeling as if we were going to a play—perhaps a mite indignant, as if the subject of the play were one we did not quite approve of, but perfectly certain of a good time.

The court was crowded. The bearded professor, his four boys and two other natives were there, as well as several English officials, all apparently on very good terms, indeed, with Schillingschen.

As we entered the court under the eyes of a hostile crowd, I heard one official say to the man standing next him:

"I hope he'll make an example of this case. If he doesn't, every new arrival in the country will try to take the law in his own hands. I hope he fines him the limit!"

"Give me your hunting-knife, Fred!" said I, and Fred laughed as he passed it to me.

For a moment I think he thought I meant to plunge it into the too talkative official's breast.

First they called a few township cases. A drunken Mohammedan was fined five rupees, and a Hindu was ordered to remove his garbage heap before noon. Three natives were ordered to the chain-gang for a week for fighting, and a Masai, charged with stealing cattle, was remanded. Then my case was called very solemnly by a magistrate scarcely any older than myself.

The police officer acted as prosecutor. He stated that, "acting on information received," he had proceeded to the hotel, outside the door of which he saw a buck hanging—buck produced in evidence—that he had entered the hotel, found me at breakfast, and that I had not denied having shot the buck. He called his two colored *askaris* to prove that, and they reeled off what they had to say with the speed of men who had been thoroughly rehearsed. Then he put the German on the stand, and Schillingschen with a savage glare at me turned on his verbal artillery. He certainly did his worst.

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"This morning," he announced, after having been duly sworn on the Book, "that young man, whose name I do not know, approached my tent while I was dressing. The sound of a rifle being fired had wakened me earlier than usual. He carried a rifle, and I put two and two together and concluded he had shot something. Not having seen him ever before, and he standing before my tent, I asked him his name. He refused to tell me, and that made me suspicious.

"Then came my four boys, carrying a buck, which they assured me they had seen him shoot. I asked him whether he had a license to shoot game, and he at once threatened to shoot me if I did not mind my own business. Therefore I sent a note to the police at once."

His four boys were then put on the stand in turn, and they told their story through an interpreter. Their words were identical. If the interpreter spoke truth, one account did not vary from the next in the slightest degree, and that fact alone should have aroused the suspicion of any unprejudiced judge.

Having the right to cross-examine, I asked each in turn whether the rifle I had brought with me to court was the same they had seen me using. They asserted it was. Then I recalled the German and asked him the same question. He also replied in the affirmative. I asked him how he knew. He said he recognized the mark on the butt where the varnish had been chafed away.

Then I handed the hunting-knife I had borrowed from Fred to the police officer and demanded that he have the bullet cut out of the buck's carcass. The court could not object to that; so under the eyes of at least fifty witnesses a flattened Mauser bullet was produced. I called attention to the fact that my rifle was a Lee-Enfield that could not possibly have fired a Mauser bullet. The court was young and very dignified—examined the bullet and my rifle—and had to be convinced.

"Very well," said the verdict on that count, "it is proved that you did not shoot this particular buck, unless the police have evidence that you used a different rifle."

The policeman confessed that he had no evidence along that line; so the first charge was dismissed.

"But you are charged," said the magistrate, "with carrying an unregistered rifle and shooting without a license."

For answer I produced my certificate of registration and the big-game license we had paid for in Mombasa.

"Why didn't you say so before?" demanded the magistrate.

"I wasn't asked," said I.

"Case dismissed!" snapped his honor, and the court began to empty.

"Don't let it stop there!" urged Will excitedly. "That Heinie and his boys have all committed perjury! Charge them with it!"

I turned to the police officer.

"I charge all those witnesses with perjury!" I said.

"Oh," he laughed, "you can't charge natives with that. If the law against perjury was strictly enforced the jails wouldn't hold a fiftieth of them! They don't understand."

"But that blackguard with a beard—that rascal Schillingschen understands!" said I. "Arrest him! Charge him with it!"

"That's for the court to do," he answered. "I've no authority."

The magistrate had gone.

"Who is the senior official in this town?" I demanded.

"There he goes," he answered. "That man in the white suit with the round white topee is the collector."

So we three followed the collector to his office, arriving about two minutes after the man himself. The Goanese clerk had been in the court and recognized me. He had not stayed to hear the end.

"Fines should be paid in the court, not here!" he intimated rudely.

We wasted no time with him but walked on through, and the collector greeted us without obvious cordiality. He did not ask us to sit down.

"My friend here has come to tell you about that man Schillingschen," said Fred.

"I suppose you mean Professor Schilingschen?"

THE collector was a clean-shaven man with a blue jowl that suffered from blunt razors, and a temper rendered raw by native cooking. But he had photos of feminine relatives and a little house in a dreary Midland street on his desk, and he was no doubt loyal to the light he saw. I wished we had Monty with us.

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One glimpse of the owner of a title that stands written in the Doomsday Book would have outshone the halo of Schillingschen's culture.

I rattled off what I had to say, telling the story from the moment when I started to follow Hassan from the hotel down to the end, omitting nothing.

"Schillingschen is worse than a spy," I said. "He is worse than a mere liar. He's a black-hearted schemer. He's planning to upset British rule in this protectorate and make it easy for the Germans to usurp!"

"This is nonsense!" the collector interrupted. "Professor Schillingschen is the honored friend of the British Government. He came to us here with the most influential backing—letters of introduction from very exalted personages, I assure you! Professor Schillingschen is one of the most—if not the most—learned ethnologists in the world today. How dare you traduce him!'

"But you heard him tell lies in court!" I gasped. "You were there. You heard his evidence absolutely disproved. How do you explain that away?"

"I don't attempt to! The explanation is for you to make!" he answered. "The fact that he did not succeed in proving his case against you is nothing in itself! Many a case in court is lost from lack of proper evidence! And one more matter! Lady Isobel Saffren Waldon is staying—or rather, I should say, was staying—at the hotel. She is now staying at my house.

"She complains to me of very rude treatment at the hands of you three men—insolent treatment, I should call it! I can assure you that the way to get on in this protectorate is not to behave like cads toward ladies of title! I understand that her maid is afraid to be caught alone by any one of you and that Lady Saffren Waldon herself feels scarcely any safer!"

Fred and I saw the humor of the thing, and that enabled us to save Will from disaster. There never was a man more respectful of women than Will. He would even get off the sidewalk for a black woman and would neither tell nor laugh at the sort of stories that pass current about women in some smoking-rooms. His hair bristled. His ears stuck out on either side of his head. He leaned forward—laid one strong, brown hand on the desk—and shook his left fist under the collector's nose.

"You poor boob!" he exploded. Then he calmed himself. "I'm sorry for your Government if you're the brightest jewel it has for this job! That Jane will use everything you've got except the squeal! Great suffering Jemima! Your title is 'collector', is it? Do you collect bugs by any chance? You act like it! So help you two men and a boy, a bughouse is where I believe you belong! Come along, fellows; he'll bite us if we stay!"

"Be advised," said the collector, leaning back in his chair and sneering. "Behave yourselves! This is no country for taking chances with the law!"

"Remember Courtney's advice," said Fred when we got outside. "Suppose we give him a few days to learn the facts about Lady Isobel and then go back and try him again?"

"Say!" answered Yerkes, stopping and turning to face us. "What d'you take me for? I like my meals. I like three squares a day and tobacco now and then. But if this was the Sahara and that man had the only eats and drinks, I'd starve!"

"Telling him the truth wouldn't be accepting favors from him," counseled Fred sagely.

"I wouldn't tell him the time!" growled Yerkes.

That attitude—and Will insisted that all the officials in the land would prove alike—limited our choice, for, unless we were to allay official suspicion, it would be hopeless to try to get away northward. Southward into German East seemed the only way to go; there was no law against travel in that direction. On our way to the hotel we passed Coutlass, striding along, smirking to himself, headed toward the office from which we had just come.

"I'll bet you," said Will, "he's off to get an ammunition permit and permission to go where he —— well pleases! I'll bet he gets both! This country's the limit!"

We laughed, but Yerkes proved more than half-right. Coutlass did get ammunition. Lady Saffren Waldon's influence was already strong enough for that. He did not ask for leave to go anywhere for the simple reason that his movements depended wholly on ours—a fact that developed later.

TO BE CONTINUED

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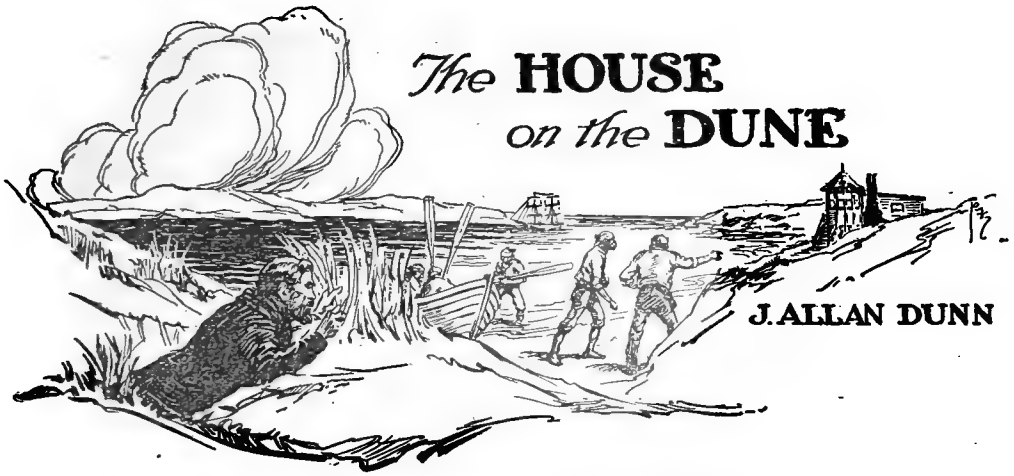

The HOUSE on the DUNE

J. ALLAN DUNN

Author of "Pearls of Great Price," "As a Man Is," etc.

THE car was going along at a lively clip, bumping along out to the beach with only a few stops by streets that showed up as little more than a corner sign and a lamp-post, with perhaps a frame house or two stuck up among the dunes. It was hardly five o'clock, but there was little light on account of the fog that had crept in, as usual, round about four. Out there in the sand-lots it was thickest.

The floor pitched a bit, especially when we made the curves; but, to a man who had walked the bridge in all sorts of weather, it meant nothing, and I remember that I stood close to the front exit with both hands holding the evening paper. There were mostly women aboard, and I had given up my seat to one of them. It was the shopping crowd from Market Street, hurrying home to get supper started and hide the storeslips before hubby arrived. I was on my way to visit "Stub" Hudson, the only crimp I ever knew who had a heart.

I had known Stub in Honolulu just before he quit partnership with "Sharky" Black. Sharky's first name had nothing to do with his christening but had been handed to him gratis on account of his nature. Sharky had shanghaied me once when I was in no condition to vote "no," though he knew well I was no common seaman. He had thrown in a few extra touches, and I was anxious to meet up with Sharky to tell him —and show him—how I appreciated his sense of humor.

I figured that Stub, who was now running a road-house on the Beach Boulevard, not far from the Cliff House, might know something of Sharky's whereabouts. Sharky had got too predatory for Honolulu and cleared out, unsighed for and unsung. That much I knew for myself, but, not having read of his hanging or electrocution or murder, I was fairly certain he was still alive. With time on my hands, and some money, I was willing to spend a little of both to place him.

Once in a while I looked off the sporting page at the girl I had given my seat to, not with any idea of being fresh, but because she was well worth the seeing. She was different. She had on a blue serge dress and she was slim but well-rounded, fine-lined, as you would say about a smart clipper. She had on a cute little hat, and under it her hair was brown with copper lights in it.

I couldn't see the color of her eyes on account of the length of her lashes, but she had no paint on her face—which was more than you could say about most of the rest in the car, however well they may have handled it. She was healthily pale, though she had little blue shadows under her eyes, like those you see in snow hollows. Tired and a bit worried, I figured. Her lips were the color of hybiscus petals, and, when every little while she bit down on the lower one, I saw a row of teeth like pearls—and I know pearls.

The way she was sizing me up made me nervous. She never let up on it as long

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as I was reading. I could tell it. Her will bored clean through the sheet. Not flirting—just trying to figure me out, as if I was some long lost relation and she was trying to make up her mind to speak. I had never set eyes on her before. She wasn't the kind you'd forget in a hurry, even if you'd glimpsed her with your train going one way and hers another.

Once I caught her fairly staring at my wrist. A Jap at Yokohama had done that job, the main points of the compass pricked out in blue and red. It began to make me fidgety, all that attention. At the best I'd never draw a prize at a beauty show, and I was whiskered like a hairy Ainu. It wasn't for my looks she was giving me inspection. As I've said before, she wasn't that kind of a girl. I folded up my paper and stuck it in one pocket of my reefer and shoved both hands in up to the wrists. Perhaps she figured I was annoyed. Anyway, she looked at me.

Did you ever look down into a well, expecting to see clear, cool water, and find it bubbling and roily—disturbed? Man, the blue eyes of that girl were as full of trouble as the lagoon at Malaita in a *kona* gale. And the look in them was the look of a skipper who tries to pick up range-lights for a harbor on a lee shore with the air full of spindrift and the wind blowing forty-fifty.

Just for the second we weren't in a street-car. The two of us were out on some lonely beach with the coco-palms slashing on one side and the reef booming on the other. And she, a woman, was asking help of me, a man. Then we were back again, and the crowd on the car were staring at both of us. They were females, and they had sensed something in the atmosphere—the way electricity 'll prick up your scalp before an equinoctial breaks.

I took out the paper again, and the girl fiddled with her bag. No seaman is able who can't fetch ninety degrees of horizon by using the tail of his eye. I knew the girl had got out an envelope, taken the letter from it, torn off the flaps from the envelope and commenced writing on the back of it with a pencil, though I was reading for the second time how "Presidio Pete" had walloped "Potrero Jack" in the fifth. She folds up what she had written, seemingly sticks it down in her bag and closes the contraption.

The conductor howled out "Bonita Avenue," and she got up to go. The car stopped with a jar and threw her against me in the aisle. She said "Excuse me" same time that I did and brushed by for the exit. As she passed me, I felt her hand in my left-hand side pocket. I have some gumption, and I knew what it was—the note she had been scribbling. It had been written on the back of an envelope, mind you. More than likely that envelope had her address written on it. Had some tie-up with her, anyway. She had used it as a sort of guarantee of good faith, the way I figured it.

I wasn't going to take it out in the car. I moved to the rear end and told the conductor to put me off at the next stop. That was three blocks away. No one else got off, and I tacked back for where I fancied she was waiting for me at the corner of Bonita Avenue. The fog had got thicker. I walked south two blocks and a half before I saw the electric lamp all blurred and haloed with the mist. She was there by the post. No one else in sight, no houses or other lights showing. We were all wrapped in by the fog. Her hair was dewy with it, sparkling under the electric like rainbow dust.

I put out my hand to her as I came up and she took it with a tidy little grip of her own, though her hands were cold.

"Thank you," she said. And then, "You're thinking me shameless?"

I was thinking her beautiful. Maybe my eyes talked a bit, for she drew her hand away.

"Here is your note," I told her and handed it out.

Something in the way it was twisted put her wise that I hadn't opened it.

"Didn't you read it?" she asked, and her voice was like a pat on the head to a good dog you were a bit afraid of up to that minute.

"Not necessary," I said. "What can I do for you?"

She untwisted the thing and gave it back to me, open.

"Read it, both sides," she said.

So I read—

My father and I are in trouble. He is a sea-captain. If you want to help, meet me after I get off the car.

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And, on the other—

Miss Molly Keville,
Bonita Avenue,
San Francisco,
Calif.

"My name is Scudder, miss," I said as I took off my hat. "Tom Scudder."

"'Tis a good name for a sailor," she said with a bit of a smile. "I knew you were a sailor, you know, by your tan and the way you stood without holding and——"

"The tattoo on my wrist. I'm a sailor, Miss Keville. I've been lucky in the South Seas, and I can sail any one of six of my own bottoms when I want to." That was bragging a bit, but I wanted her to know I was master and not bunking for'ard. "Is this Bonita Avenue?"

"They call it that, Mr. Scudder. Ours is the only house on it, and it's quite a way."

IT WAS nice, the way she took it for granted I was coming. We swung along together, she walking free as a boy, up the avenue that was just a dry dredge through the dunes. Soon we heard the boom of the sea and caught the deep smell of it where the wind off the heads was trying to press through the mist. That same wind had filled in the cut through which we were progressing, and there were sand lupines growing in the path.

It was almost dark now. Back of that curtain of mist the sun must have been close to the horizon, China-way. A gull or two sirened like banshees. I thought of the flash I had got in the car of her and me meeting on a lonely shore. There was some tie between us, back in the past, perhaps—in the future, I had already begun to hope. It was certain we were no longer strangers to each other.

Those things come quickly. There was a *compradore* I knew in Macao, a very wise old Chinaman who liked to talk about such things.

"The outside world thinks there is no such thing as love in China," he told me; "that we have no use for women. Because we have more than one wife, it may be. But there is always the one with us as with all men. When you meet the one, Scudder, my friend, you will know it. It will come over you like a wave that suddenly lifts in mid-ocean when the sea is calm. And that is because your soul, which is a complex inheritance from your ancestors, recognizes in her certain things that your ancestors have loved in their women, each in his one. Some day, when that happens, because I have told you this truth and because you are my friend, you must write and tell me.

And that was the way of it with me in the fog that night.

"I want to tell you about it before we go in," she said. "My father is a captain, too. But he will never go to sea again. He is paralyzed. And I am all that he has left. Now, because he fears he may lose me, and I him, he needs a strong man for a friend. We have none of that sort. We have lost our money during the war. I do what I can, but it is not much. We have only one hope left, and that is backed by fear."

Suddenly, high on a dune to the left, a house with dim lights in its second story loomed up. It looked like a derelict lighthouse with the lamps dying. The smell of the kelp was strong, and the beat of the long rollers was only a few fathoms distant. The sand fell off to the right.

Only a sailor would have built that house. The ground floor looked like a big, square box, dark to the night. On this an eight-sided watch-tower had been built, just frames and glass, a place for some one to sit in and, when the fog cleared, watch the ships come up from north and south and west and glide into harborage through the Golden Gate.

She stopped me with her hand on my arm to finish her story.

"You say you have been in the South Seas," she said. "Do you know the Tuamotus?"

"The Flowery Islands. Well. My luck started there. In pearls."

"Have you ever heard of the Lost Galleon?"

"The *San Cristobal?* Every one who knows the Tuamotus has heard of it. Many have looked for it. The French Government tried."

"My father found it. He knows where it lies, inside the reef in a deep pool in the lagoon, walled in by coral rock that must have been built up since the gale drove in the galleon. It is an atoll, not on the charts, unnamed, not even claimed by the French, south and east of the Tuamotu Group.

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"He had no money for the salvage. It would be very costly work. There is supposed to be gold aboard with gems from the Philippines, but there might be nothing. It is a speculation. There is another man who knew that father held the secret, though he pretends to doubt it. This man has a hold over father. He offered to provide the money and his ship and the men and go equal shares with father. Because of the hold he has over him, father made a bargain with him and he sailed.

"Now he is on his way back, after eight months. He has not written, but we know that his ship put in at San Pedro for water—they had been in a bad storm and were blown out of their course. So they had to put in instead of coming direct to San Francisco. It was in the paper this morning. Father figures—he has been watching for months—that now he should arrive tomorrow morning. And then——"

She stopped with her young breast heaving like a royal trying to break the clews. I did not yet see where I was wanted, unless it was to best this chap who had a hold on the old captain. Her hold on my arm tightened to a clutch.

"He will lie," she said. "He will lie and say there was no treasure. And then——"

With her free hand she pressed white fingers over her heart. In the little light that struggled down from the watch-tower I saw her face twisted awry with emotion.

"I, too, made a bargain with him," she went on, fighting a bit for her breath. "If he found the treasure all would be well. He would go away with his share. If not—unless I—married him—he swore to see that father—my father—should swing for it. That was how he put it—swing for it."

She must have felt my muscles tauten under my sleeve, for she gave me a look of confidence that thrilled me to desperate things if necessary.

"Your father," I began.

"He has never told me what he did, but he does not deny it. He is a passionate man and he might—in a frenzy—he might have killed some one. I know the galleon is there. I have seen it myself, with the blue and scarlet parrot-fish and the masses of weed all about it. So my bargain was a part of father's bargain, though he does not know it. And this man will lie."

"And you?"

"I would kill myself before I let him touch me. I loathe him, with his eyes like a shark's, his hairy arms! But—there is father. I don't know what to do! I don't know what to do with father helpless in his chair. He has got worse. It was only partial at first, and he could get up to the watch-tower. Now——"

"Suppose we go in and talk it over with him. Let me talk with him. I have heard of Captain Keville, though I do not think he knows my name. I can make up some yarn to introduce myself."

"I have thought of that," she said. "I work in the Merchants' Exchange. It would have been easy for you to have met me there and, learning my name——"

"Fine," I said and took her arm to go up the dune.

It wouldn't be hard for me to gam with the captain. I knew something about that lost galleon, also, though I hadn't made up my mind to say anything.

IT WAS sickening to see that broken giant helpless in his chair, all his life in his face, numb from the neck down save for one feeble forearm. A strong man even yet, with all his baffled will looking out of his eyes. I bought a frigate-bird that some Kanakas had chained to a stump. The look was the same. Unafraid. There was uneasiness in the old skipper's eyes, the swift peeping out of some wraith that now and then invaded his brain.

But it was not terror for himself. If ever a jury could convict that bulk of manhood, he would go to his death with his head up and his jaw set and the same look in his eyes. I guessed what troubled him. He suspected his daughter's bargain with the pirate. And she dreaded that he did. That was what she had meant when she said he feared to lose her.

A brow of brass, eyes the color of flare ice, a nose like the prow of a deep-sea ship, a mouth tight-lipped under gray viking mustaches, and a long gray beard that swept half-way to his belt—all in all, there was something peculiarly familiar to me about him—he was one of those shady figures that memory retains but which the mind can not place. He welcomed me with the gaze of a man who knows other men and rates them in an instant. The girl had introduced us, saying she had brought me home at my wish to talk with him and had

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promised me supper. Then she vanished to get the meal ready.

The ground floor box had an ell, but the main part of it was one big room with a stone fireplace that had driftwood flaming blue and green and red, a gallery all around it and stairs leading into the watch-tower. There were *tapa*-cloths and South Sea weapons and shells all about, some books and models of ships and canoes. Jute rugs on the floor from China, a long, heavy-timbered table with charts spread over it, the chair beside it.

A fine place on a sunny day, but a melancholy spot in a storm or fog, despite the fire. Two windows faced the sea, heavily shuttered, and I fancied the captain wheeled to one of them, looking through binoculars or with his own sea-sharpened eyes for the ship to come up from the south. We fell to talking easily enough. We knew many acquaintances in common and the gam was of trade between Capricorn and Cancer, old yarns of the islands, with never a word of the galleon or his own affairs. He was not the sort to do that. But he was glad to see me and discuss the old days, the old ways, the prices of copra and *bêche-de-mer*, sharks' fin, turtle shell and pearls. He called once to his daughter, and she brought in a bottle with hot water and lemons, and we brewed a grog. I knew then that he had accepted me at something of the girl's valuation.

"I'm glad to meet you, Captain Scudder," he said as we lit our pipes. "I'm badly stranded, as you see, with only Molly to stand by.

While we were eating, I knew his look played between me and the girl almost wistfully, though that's not the word to fit the expression of those amber eyes, the eyes of the chained frigate-bird. We played cards after the meal, the three of us at rhum when Molly had cleared away and I had helped her clear galley.

"He likes you," she said as I wiped the plates. "I am so glad. But what can we do—when the ship comes?"

"I'm going to figure that out tonight," I told her. "I was on my way to visit an old friend. He'll put me up. And I'll be down there on the beach by sunup. You haven't told me the name of this swashbuckling, sea-bound partner of your dad's."

She told me. I knew something of the fellow, and I thought I could find out more.

"Don't you worry," I said. "We'll find some way to foul his tackle."

"You have a plan?" she asked, her face eager.

"The makings," I answered, and then we went in to the skipper.

"I hope you'll come again, Captain," he said when I got up to go. "I hope you can come again."

That "can" was the only tip he gave that things were wrong, and I made on not to notice it. Molly said good night to me at the door, with the fog rolling up like smoke over the dunes. I have never stopped sensing the feel of her hand that night, cuddling in my palm, a gage of trust and fellowship.

STUB HUDSON was doing well at the Breakers, with a dancing floor and a cabaret and machines coming out despite the fog through Golden Gate Park. We had a long chat together, and I found out what he knew about Sharky Black. He put me up in a cozy bunk at midnight.

"The straight and narrow pays, Stub?" I asked.

He winked at me.

"We don't have to pull much of the rough stuff," he said. "Sometimes, after the swells go, it warms up. Don't let anything you hear disturb your sleep."

I winked back and then asked him for something that made him look at me cock-eyed and doubtful.

"You'll not say where you got it?" he wanted to know.

I assured him as to that and presently he brought me up a pint flask of the stuff, kissing the cork. And I turned in with a clear conscience.

In April the fog is an uncertain quantity. The trade is beginning to blow steady, and sometimes it brooms the coast overnight. It was that way the next morning—clear sky with cumulus to the northwest and a sparkling sea running under it. It was too early for cars. I walked back along the beach with my eyes peeled. The sun was back of me and the sea-rim was not sharp, but, as the sun mounted, the sky-dazzle disappeared and there was what I was looking for—and Captain Keville and his daughter were looking for—a brig with backed topsails, well out, hove to.

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I had borrowed a pair of binoculars from Stub, and I soon picked up a whale-boat coming in. It was a long pull, for the pirate had come up into the wind well outside the three-mile line. If he had been on the square, he would have sailed into the harbor; but here he was sending a boat off before folks were astir. As she came on, well pulled, the brig squared off, now sailing off and on with one man on deck, whaler-fashion when they don't trust the crew ashore.

There were four men rowing, a man in the bows and another at the steering-oar. It is not an easy landing in surf where the beach slopes slowly; I tucked myself down in a niche of the dunes, lit my pipe and watched to see how they would handle it. Stub's all-night cook had fixed me for breakfast, and I was cozy. I hoped for an upset and prayed the pirates couldn't swim, but they made it all right, coming in on a green roller and all hands waist-deep to beach her.

Two blackguards got out and walked up toward the house, hidden behind the first rank of sand-hills. They were both big men, and one was black and shiny as satin, with twinkling gold rings in his ears, a red bandanna about his wool and his dungarees tucked up well above his big calves, his sharp-shinned legs and feet bare. I could feel the jaw-muscles ball as I clamped down at sight of the other, a swaggering, black-bearded devil, handsome to some women in a swarthy, bullying way, without a coat, blue-flanneled and with a flat automatic in a holster at his waist.

Bonita Avenue was south of the end of the Beach Boulevard. At that hour, at almost any hour, it was as lonesome as Midway Island before the cable came. The speculator who had tried to popularize those dunes had made a mess of it for himself and the suckers who had bitten. It was a rare spot for such a game—a game that I was going to take a hand in. I was on the shore side of my dune, looking through a gap that was masked with the coarse grass that faced the sea. About and below me the lee sand was gardened with purple and yellow lupines and gold poppies with an early bee or so buzzing through them. I sneaked down the little valley between the hills and came out on the beach, drunk as a paid-off Kanaka.

The four rowers—two were Sandwich Islanders; two of the white muck one has to ship nowadays—were sitting on the gunwale of their boat, waiting orders. I knew their kind from calluses to crown, and I swayed out, singing a bit, not too loud.

It was "Hello, mateys," and some rough kidding on both sides, and I had them. They took me for what I wanted, a sailor-man who had put in a night on the beach and had been chucked out before daylight.

"Give us a sniff o' your breath," said one of them. "I ain't seen grog or smelled it or tasted the stuff for a month. Nothin' doin' on board that hooker, —— her rotten bilge. Matey, how far is it to a touch? And, if you ain't spent all your grog money, you might slip us the price of a pint. Not a drop down my gullet since Honolulu, so help me, and twenty-eight days comin' to San Pedro."

"Pals," I said with my voice thick and my feet clubbed, "you poor unfortunate slaves of a bully-boss don't have to travel for a drink. I've got my skin full and I know where I can get it full again."

I pulled out my flask, and they grabbed for it, gulping it down and snatching it from each other like wild dogs with a chunk of meat. Men of their kind, kept without liquor by a foxy skipper, suck up liquor without thought to color, taste or quality, as the desert sucks rain. It was gone in four swallows, and then they grinned at me and looked foolish.

They were more foolish two minutes later. Stub had followed my directions and put in drops enough to make a quick and thorough job of it. They slumped to the sand like down-hauled jibs. I left them where they lay and finished my job in a rush. First I ran the five oars under loose sand beneath lupine bunches and then took a second look at the tide. If it had been ebb, I might have chanced it and shoved off the boat; but it was still flooding, and they might have seen it in the surf from the house and spoiled the rest of my program.

I spruced up hastily and went back and up to the house. The big negro was just coming sulkily out of the door. I heard the thunder of the old skipper's voice in the roar that tops a gale.

"I'll have no black dog in my house. Get outside, you dingy-hided cur."

It was the voice of undisputed command, and my heart warmed to it. The black

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slunk by me with a malevolent look and went round the corner of the house. Long usage made him cringe, though I imagine his chief had tipped him the look to go. But he obeyed the voice of the master. He did not go down to the beach, where the sailors lay dead to the world. I was glad I had not set the boat adrift. He would not notice the oars even if he could see the craft. He was to wait and listen.

The man from the brig was astraddle in the middle of the big room. To one side of the fireplace stood the wheel-chair with Captain Keville actually leaning forward from it, the knuckles of his one good hand white where it gripped the arm. Molly was beside him, and the pirate was laughing in his black beard. He turned sharply as I came in, and his face challenged mine, none too pleased at the interruption, none too chary about showing his mood.

"Who the devil are you?" he asked coolly.

"My name does not matter," I said. "You can call me a friend of the family if you like."

His suavity leaped from him like flame when a match is touched to powder. Without doubt he had timed the matter closely and did not want to run the risks of too strong daylight. He made a quick gesture toward his holster and then checked it, turning his back on me instead.

"I am the best friend this family has got," he blustered, talking to the skipper and Molly, white-faced and desperate. "Keville, you old swindler, that treasure ship of yours is a bunk, beginning to end. I've wasted eight months and that many thousand dollars, and now I've come for the reckoning. You've made a byword of me with your fool's errand, but there's another tag to my bargain. Your girl promised to come with me if the deal fell through. My ship's waiting and my boat's on the beach. I've fooled long enough. Come."

He put out one knuckly, hairy hand toward the girl, who shrank back.

"To—come—with you? Aboard your ship?" she whispered, horror in her eyes.

"You heard it. Unless you want your wreck of a father there to swap his chair for another variety—known as the electric!"

He reached for her as she stood cataleptic, while her father's face was purple with congestion that choked off his speech.

I took a step forward and gripped his arm just above the elbow, swinging him about.

"See here, my man," I said and almost chuckled as I saw the devil of temper leap into his eyes at my greeting. "I know something of this deal. You found the galleon, as Keville promised. That there was nothing aboard—if you are not lying about that?" Again I noted the glare of intolerance. "If you are not lying about that," I repeated, "why, you took the gambler's chance with Keville. Are you squealing over that?

"As for your talk of sending Kivelle to the chair or the gallows: is that because it is the only way that you can win a woman? You blustering bully, you cheap copra-cadger, you black-birding, black-mailing bucko, with only sand enough to bulldoze a helpless man twice your age and a girl half of it, you're only a cheap bluff and you know it. That's your record where you come from, and you had better go back where your standing is recognized and you are tolerated because of the gin you can buy for half-whites, instead of trying to kidnap an unwilling girl!"

His hand itched for his pistol. But I had him by one arm, and he was still cool enough not to chance an alarm. His eyes were crimson glazed by this, and he glared at me like a devil fighting for self-control.

"I've heard your voice before," he said. "And the same kind of cheap talk in it. I'll place it before I'm through, and then we'll have a reckoning. Meantime you keep out of my affairs. Who says the girl is unwilling?"

"Look at her," I said.

"I think she'll be willing when she thinks over things a bit," he replied, his voice silkily smooth. "She mustn't forget the wedding present I'm going to give her—for I'll marry her if she insists upon it—her father's life. It isn't every one who would tie up with the daughter of a murderer!"

The veins in the captain's face stood out like reef-points. He struggled for speech.

"I would, for one," I answered. "Come. You want the girl. So do I. If you are a man instead of a copra-louse, which I think you are, win her. Win her from me."

MOLLY darted one fearful look at me, and I smiled at her. He was loose from my grip by this, and he stepped back, sizing me up. I had played both ways to the ace. If the man was a coward, I won. If he took up my challenge,

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he only followed my suit—and I wasn't leading to lose. As for the threat he held over Keville: I held another card up my sleeve in that matter. But, oh, how I ached to fight him. There was more than one reason. One was vainglorious, brutish, the longing to show myself the better man. He was as big as I was, broader a little, longer-armed, a little heavier. I saw him weigh the chances.

"Afraid of an even fight?" I asked. "Man to man?"

"I'll fight you," he said slowly. "And, when I've got you licked and whimpering, I'll take you aboard for cabin-boy. You can make up our bunk," he added leeringly.

My nails were drinking blood from my palms, but I had him where I wanted. He had forgotten everything now but the desire to humiliate me.

"Put your gun on the table," I said. "I have none."

He did it willingly enough, but I remembered the black joker he might play.

"Let your father have it, Molly," I said, and she obeyed me too deftly for him to interfere.

"Can you handle it, Captain Keville?" I asked, and the old skipper nodded.

There was an unholy light in his eyes now, the joy of combat, though he was still tongue-tied.

"If that black devil tries to break in here, I said. "Shoot him."

The feeble fingers closed about the handle of the gun, and the uncertain forearm raised unwaveringly.

"Molly," I ordered, "get up into the gallery."

She threw one look at me, a look that was all woman, the woman who had met with me on a lonely strand, a look that dubbed me her defender, and obeyed.

There was no need of referee or rules in that fight. He would have disregarded them, and I was not far behind him. We moved the table back together, a barrier in front of the old man in his chair. He leaned his forearm upon it, with the pistol steady, and we stood off.

In the pirate's first move he gripped my feinting right by the wrist and assayed to turn, twisting it, trying to break it across his shoulder. But I caught him with my left by his black beard and pulled his face forward as I butted with the top of my skull. As his knee came up, I crossed his shin with mine, and we broke with the blood spurting from his squashed features. He was on with the bellow of a bull, and we closed, struggling and stamping, I feeling for his throat, he for my eyes. It was neither chivalric nor pretty to witness by the girl who hung over the gallery rail.

I got loose with one eye smarting and a bruised side, but I had hammered hard over his kidneys and heard him grunt with the pain. At the end of five minutes we were ragged to the waists and streaked with blood. For a few seconds we stood catching our wind, and then he rushed, dropped to one knee as if in a slip and caught me fairly round the waist, striving to lift me while I bludgeoned at his loins. That broke his hold at the last when the breath was well nigh out of me and the blood rushing to my head made me dizzy.

The rest I have lost, save the end. I remember our standing toe to toe, flailing at each other, and I came out of the mutual weariness of a clinch when his teeth tore my shoulder. But at last I knew him failing. He had gained an underhold, and I broke it and got him about his ribs, forcing him backward. We brought up against the table, and I slowly bent him over the thick plank that formed the top, bent him backward until he squealed. I heard, or thought I heard, something crack, and he collapsed. As I stepped back, he sprang up like a bow in a last frenzy, taking me almost unaware. I could hardly see, but one word rallied me. It came from the gallery.

"Tom!"

I saw through a haze, redly, and I swung from my hip. The smash caught him on the jaw, the same jaw I had beaten at in vain. But this time the aim was truer or his vitality had gone. His head sagged on his neck and he went down, the back of his skull striking the table. I staggered back against the fireplace—done. Molly came down-stairs in a mist, but I waved her aside.

"Air," I cried. "Give me air!"

The room seemed exhausted of oxygen, and my lungs labored, with my heart pounding painfully.

She flung open the door, and the salty air gushed in. I breathed it as a diver who has gone too deep. The punishment had been severe, and with an effort I held myself from sliding to the floor. My

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knees trembled, and my legs sagged as I essayed to smile at where Molly might be—I could not see for the moment.

There was a splintering crash behind me, a rush of some wild figure, a shriek from Molly and the bark of the gun!

Energy came back. And sense. The black had broken into the ell, come through the after door and, sweeping the girl into his arms, had leaped out unscathed.

The old captain was mouthing incoherent syllables, his face hideous with the effort to rise.

"Give me the gun," I cried and snatched it.

My man was still prostrate as I jumped over him and broke through the door.

The negro was running for the beach, calling as he went to the four rowers. He had one smutty hand across Molly's mouth. And I went lunging after him over the sand in the bright sunlight, all my senses back at the sight of my love being carried off by that sooty brute. He had no more brains than he was born with, and the sight of the senseless men rattled him. He made for the boat, lifting the girl high in his arms when I fired.

The bullet went true, plunging through the soft hollow of his back-knee, smashing the cap. He pitched forward as I caught up with him and grasped Molly. Then he flung out his arms and tumbled on the sloping beach, in his agony rolling over and over into the wash. I left him thrashing there and bore my girl back to the dune, laying her down while I tugged at the collar of her waist, for she had fainted.

Presently her eyes opened and the blue pools were limpid, holding something I had fought to find there. There was shouting back of us as I picked her up again, but I paid no attention to it and went on to the house, shutting the door and locking it. For the man I had fought—Sharky Black—was gone.

Captain Keville found speech with whisky. Molly brought out water and towels and set them on the table, trying to bathe my wounds. One big bruise upon my shoulder she kissed and left some tears there for a more precious anodyne.

"Where are they?" gasped Keville.

"They'll not come back," I answered and told them of the drugging and the hidden oars, of the smashed knee.

Molly listened with her face aglow. Then she shuddered.

"But Black," she said with a frightened glance, first at the door, then at her father. "He will——"

"Don't bother about him," I said. "For one thing, I told him who I was when we grappled. I had a score to settle with him. It was my beard that threw him off at the start. As it did you, sir."

I turned to Keville, who gaped at me.

"When you went into Louie's place at Tahiti," I said, "looking for a sailor who had slipped you at Viti Levu, another skipper interfered, having already paid advance money for the man. Some fool broke the lamp, and there was a general row. You bashed the other skipper over the head with a club you carried for insubordinate Kanakas. They hurried you away, and Black advised you to put to sea, saying the man was dead. Later he shanghaied that man while he was still unconscious. You didn't know his name, but, if you'll loan me a razor, you may remember his face if you got a good look at it, for you were pretty mad. It was a good crack you clipped me, Captain Keville. I've got a bit of a scar yet somewhere under my hair, but I'm a long way from being dead."

He stared at me while Molly came up and slipped her hand into mine.

"So they won't come back," I went on. "And Sharky is out his eight months and his eight thousand dollars, plus his labor."

"But the galleon," said Keville. "He found the galleon. He may have lied about the treasure."

"There is a tag to that," I said. "When the French Government quit trying to find the *San Cristobal*, it was because they had found out something from old archives. She was not coming from the Philippines when she was lost, but going there. All she had aboard by way of cargo was *cinchona* bark, gathered in South America for the fevers in Luzon."

"Which leaves me nothing," he said. "Save my peace of mind. I had hoped that Molly——"

I slid my arm round Molly's waist, and she caught at my hand with hers and pressed it.

"Don't worry about Molly," I said. "I've got plenty for all of us."

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70 BELOW

by BEN F. BAKER

Author of "Mis-Deal."

TO SOME folks a crazy man is funny. Then, again, to other folks a funny man is crazy.

These two kinds of *hombres* divides every tribe and township on this twinklin' little star square in the middle.

There's an exact, even half of us in each division. But, sometimes, it's awful hard to tell which side of the fence a galoot belongs on.

One time, I vacation for the Winter down in San Francisco, and the funniest thing I see during that whole festive season is an Injun, wearin' store clothes, moccasins, two long braids an' a sombrero, sight-seein' in Chinatown with a rubber-neck party.

At that, maybe this siwash ain't so crazy as he looks.

It's pretty hard to tell. Maybe he's got all them Chinks, as well as that rubber-neck crowd, doped out as belongin' to class one. And who's competent to say he's wrong?

I KNOW another loco, one time, that's acknowledged and declared to be a crazy man—or leastways, an irritatin', agravatin', cuss-provokin' nut. But who knows?

This itchin' scab on the body politic of Manook is likewise an Injun, an' he proudly answers to the name of Charlie Whole-cheese. He christens himself with this here appellation after watchin' a bunch of soldiers drillin' at Tanana. It's the first time he ever sees a soldier, an' he's anxious to know why a whole herd of growed up men walks around an' stops an' goes through a lot of funny motions with a gun, jest because one man tells 'em to. So he asks a passin' miner who is this guy that's doin' all the bossin', an' the miner, who's hurryin' to get a drink, tells him—

"Oh, he's the whole cheese."

Admirin' the captain an' his job an' his uniform upsets this siwash to such a degree that he decides to annex the officer's title; so he labels himself accordin'. Him bein' jest plain Charlie before, he now becomes Charlie Wholecheese in half a dozen camps an' along a couple of hundred miles of river.

This here child of nature is a marked man in two or three other ways besides his name. First, he's an outcast. Neither white or Injun owns or harbors him except for long enough to feed him an' then kick him out. Second, he's cracked—his dome leaks. He's plain simple an' foolish. Next, he won't work. He positively refuses to approach anything that savors of toil.

An' last, but not least by a whole lot, he's always a-smilin'. Some time or other somebody has kicked him outside durin' a cold spell an' he freezes his face. This freeze puffs up his map permanent an' leaves him pig-eyed. So his perpetual grin is funny an' pitiful an' kind of sickenin'

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—an' a thing to remember. Added to all this, he's dirty, even for an Injun. Once he gets up-wind, you don't never forget him no more. It's a cinch he never dies layin' down—he's that strong.

As I says before, he's a marked man. But with all these handicaps C. Wholecheese meanders from camp to camp, beggin' his grub from white man an' Injun an' sleepin', once in a while, on somebody's cabin floor, but mostly outside where there's a thick patch of moss. But sleepin' or wakin', hungry or gorged, he's always a-grinnin'.

Well, one Winter, along in January, I get the word to drop everything an' fly for the upper Tanana. I been hearin' a lot about a new strike up there, but this time the tip comes straight an' strong from a *compadre* that I know is on the level an' plumb wise. So I hikes.

I got seven of the best dogs that ever stretches a tug, an' the purtiest set of red webbin' harness on the whole Yukon, with twelve bells to the dog an' a ten-foot white birch basket-sled that carries a thousand pounds over any trail in the land.

I'm sure proud of that outfit.

So early one mornin' I starts out from Manook an' makes the Boston Creek road-house that night. Next night I pulls up at Kelly's tradin'-post at the mouth of the Doschacket, an even fifty miles from Manook. Kelly glad hands me as soon as I top the river bank. There ain't much travel up the Tanana—yet; so he's plumb glad to see me. We unhook the dogs, hand 'em a dry salmon apiece an' pull the sled into the store. Then we mush over to Kelly's house, where his wife an' kid is waitin' for us with the dandiest supper of moose steak an' cheechako spuds you ever see.

We sure ruin that supper complete. It ain't often I get a crack at a white woman's cookin'; but, when I do, I promptly lays aside conversation, the finer feelin's an' etiket an' devotes my entire time to demolishin' grub. An' on this occasion, with a day's hard work behind me, I'm a demolishin' fool.

After a while me an' Kelly goes into the livin'-room an' lights a pipe, an' I tells him where I'm goin' an' why. An', like every other man in the land, when he hears of a strike, Kelly gets excited; an' he allows he's goin' along. We're deep into how he's goin' to throw his sleepin'-bag on to my sled an' pull out with me in the mornin', when in busts Mrs. Kelly an' spoils the whole layout.

"Jack," she says, "I'm goin' to put Dick to bed right away. He didn't eat a bite of supper," she says, "an' I'm afraid he's goin' to have another one of his spells."

The minute Kelly hears this, he's up an' out to his kid. That stampede ain't botherin' Kelly no more.

This here Dick baby is born of a full-growed woman for the Kellys has been married twelve years when this chick arrives. Now, you know what I mean when I tell you that Dick Kelly is the only child that ever was born or ever will be born anywheres in this world—so far as the Kellys is concerned. This little sourdough makes his first bow right there in that cabin. He's now half through his fourth Winter, an' he's some boy!

Well, I set there smokin' an' thinkin' of that supper an' the kid an' about Kelly an' his wife, livin' way up there with nobody but Injuns for neighbors. An' I get to wonderin' if a man an' his woman can be happy way out there on the edge of things thatway. An' then I get to figgerin'—can a *hombre* be sure enough happy without a woman—anywheres?

I'm jest about to doze off when I hear the snappin' of a big branch; then another snaps—then I step outside. The wind is comin' up like an express-train; also, it's gettin' colder.

Now, while blizzards is common enough down Nome way an' along the coast country, we don't have 'em back in the timber country maybe more'n once a Winter; but, when we do get one, she's a humdingin' blazer, an' she comes quick an' without warnin'! An' this was sure one of them! In ten minutes she's goin' full force. I barely has time to call the dogs an' get 'em into Kelly's dog-barn before the flyin' snow is so thick that I has to crawl back to the house. An' cold!

When I straighten up at the house door, somebody's standin' there, waitin' for me. I think it's Kelly; so I open the door an' push him in quick. But it ain't Kelly, for, when he pulls back the hood of his parka, there's the nasty, grinnin' mush of Charlie Wholecheese!

"What'n —— you want here?" I yells at him. "Where'd you come from?"

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"No grub me," he giggles. "I come Mentah village today. Mentah Injun no good. He no grub me. Kelly lotsa grub. Kelly grub me. Lotsa wind," he winds up casual.

I'm just about to poke Mr. Wholecheese in his ugly mug when in comes Kelly.

"The kid's bad," he says. "He's jest had a spasm, an' the missus is mighty near bugs. An' it's fifty miles to Manook an' the doctor, an' in this blizzard——"

The kid's dyin'—an' there ain't a chance on earth to get help. The best musher in the country can't win out for an hour in that snarlin', swirlin' hell that's a-ragin' up the river. An', if he could, he couldn't keep the trail for a hundred yards. Five minutes after that wind starts, there ain't no trail.

"COME in," says Kelly, openin' the bedroom door.

Now, I don't mind going hardly anywheres, but it's a hard pull to go in there where the tiny little man, who I knows off an' on since he's a sucklin', is fightin' the big fight. 'Tain't fair. He's just had another spasm, but he's quiet now. There he lays, whiter'n the snow outside an' as still an' cold-lookin' as a piece of marble.

His mother don't pay us no mind at all. I can't even guess what she's thinkin' about—if she's able to think—but it's a cinch hell don't mean nothin' to her just then.

Maybe we stand there half an hour when Dick opens his big, blue eyes—an' smiles! Yes sir! His mammy grabs him quick, an' he grabs her right back an' sings out—

"Hello, Mrs. Kelly."

Grit? I'll kiss a pig it was grit! Well, I turns to go into the next room, an' blamed if there ain't that fool Injun, standin' right there, grinnin'.

"No grub me," he says to Kelly.

I don't think Kelly knows the siwash is anywhere within a million miles until then, but he knows it plenty now. The strain he's under is maybe too much for him, for he has that Injun by the neck immediate.

"Why, you dirty scarecrow," he hisses, "how'd you get in here? Whata you mean? Answer me—quick—or I'll pull your fool head off."

"Jack!" snaps the missus. Kelly lets go like the Injun's neck was white-hot.

"No, Jack," says Kelly's little woman as she comes over an' puts her hand on the siwash's arm. "Not here. How do you think I'd feel if somebody hurt Dick? An' Charlie is some woman's boy. You go other room, Charlie. Bimebye I come fixum you plenty grub. An' tonight you sleep in the store. Bimebye I come."

An' her own kid maybe dyin'! Say, them's the kind of things that keeps us men figgerin' that, maybe, in spots some women is jest a little bit more'n human.

Well, me an' the Injun goes into the next room. An', soon as I close the door, I look at that Wholecheese party jest once. An' that look tells him, plain an' fluent, if he opens his yap one time, I murders him the very next time me an' him meets. He savvies plenty—but, at that, he never loses that fool smile for an instant.

Pretty soon, Mrs. Kelly comes in an' tells us Dick is sleepin'; then she goes into the kitchen an' fries up a few hunks of moose steak an' calls that siwash out an' feeds him. An' she stays there an' waits on him till he's full! When she goes back to her kid, Kelly comes out, an' we take the Injun an' fight our way over to the store. Kelly beds Charlie down on a pile of bearskins an' tells him to keep a good fire in the big stove, an' then me an' Kelly fights the storm once more back to the house. Believe me, she was cold an' blowin'!

The kid stays awake all night. No more spasm, but towards mornin' a ragin fever. He's locoed most of the time an' wants me to tell him stories. I'm holdin' his hot, little hand an' telling him about the two little bears an' the porcupine when he busts in an' says:

"Steve, you know what makes the wind blow so hard? God's angry. I'll bet He's angry with me 'cause I called mama 'Mrs. Kelly'—an' she told me not to. It's a heap of wind for jest one little boy, ain't it?"

Maybe He wasn't so very angry after all, 'cause about four in the mornin', the wind dies down—but she turns colder. Five o'clock I go outside an' look at the thermometer. She's an even seventy below! That's the second time in twenty years in the North that I ever see the glass so low. Well, with a good, game team of dogs a man can mush even at seventy below; so I tell Kelly to get me some breakfast. I'm goin' to start for Manook an' the doctor soon as I eat.

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After breakfast I go to the barn to harness the dogs, an'—they're gone! I tear over to the store—an' the sled's gone—an' the Injun! That low-lived, pig-faced, grinnin' siwash has vamoosed with dogs, sled an' my fox-skin robe; an' it's a mortal cinch him an' the dogs are froze stiff somewheres along the trail by now.

I'm so —— mad I pretty near cry.

It's all off with the Manook trip now, for, without dogs to haul the robe an' a little grub, there ain't a chance.

When I tell Kelly, he don't believe me.

"A Injun never steals," he says. "Where'd he go—what's he after?"

"Poor, poor Charlie," says Mrs. Kelly. "None of us knows why he did it," she says, "but he must have started before the wind stopped, an' the poor, simple boy is done for good by now."

"Yes'm, an' my dogs likewise," I says.

"Steve," she shoots back, "I'm ashamed of you!"

"Yes'm," I tell her. "I'm kinda ashamed of myself for not goin' out to the barn to visit them dogs once in a while. An' I sure hate to lose seven good dogs account of one bum Injun."

After it gets light, I mush down the river a couple of hours, but there ain't a track nor a mark nowheres. So it's plain he starts while the big wind is still on, all right, 'cause his trail blows out as fast as he makes it. On the way back to Kelly's I make up my mind that, when I find Mr. Wholecheese, he don't get buried none by me. I'm goin' to leave him right where I find him an' let the ravens clean his frame. Every one of them seven malamutes was a king dog!

The kid's fever is way up when I reach the post; he's ravin' constant. All that day, all next night, all the followin' day, that little woman stays alongside the kid's bed, watchin' her baby, waitin' on him, never complainin', thinkin' them things that women think an' men don't never understand.

She's the biggest little thing I ever see. Of course, Kelly ain't worth a whoop. Jest sets around white-faced an' grieves. An' all that long time the thermometer never budges—jest hangs like she's froze.

Well, about four o'clock that second day I got all I can stand. I'm through. The kid don't get no better nor no worse. The cold spell might last another day an' maybe two; an' what's the use waitin'? I make me up a little pack of grub, take a rabbit-skin blanket an' a good pair of snow-shoes from the store an' tell Kelly I'm leavin' for Manook at six o'clock, across country.

FIVE o'clock it's black dark. Quarter to six the first flush of the moon is showin' over the top of the Doschacket Hills; so I beat it into the house to tell Mrs. Kelly good-by.

We're all standin' there by that little bed, silent an' wonderin' an' prayin' a little, maybe, when we hear the crunch of a sled outside. Me an' Kelly starts for the door; but we get no further than the other room—for there's a man in there, waitin' for us. How come we never heard that team comin' up-river with all them bells ringin', I ain't never been able to figger out. We jest didn't. But we don't think about that jest then; it don't seem like we're able to think.

For there stands Charlie Wholecheese, swayin' like a drunken elephant, a solid rim of ice around the hood of his parka, his pig face one big chunk of frost-bitten meat, a-smilin' that silly, pitiful smile.

"Sled—doctil—me ketchum," he gurgles.

Then he kinda melts down to the floor, soft an' easy—out.

You can gamble, me an' Kelly is out of that door in one jump. Also bet your stack, the Injun ain't lyin'. There in the moonlight stands my big sled with them seven king malamutes strung out in front, flat on their bellies! That's the first time I ever see that whole team lyin' down in harness. An' there on the sled is old Doc Stebbins, wrapped up to the eyes in my big fox robe, mighty near froze.

For Charlie Wholecheese had heard Kelly's call for the white medicine-man; an' that half-witted, lazy, shiftless Injun had mushed to Manook, some way put the case square up to old doc an' then hauled the old man an' his medicine-bag back to Doschacket!

Without no grub except the fish he took along for the dogs, without sleep, with jest two hours rest at Manook while doc was gettin' ready, without even a trail, that perpetual joke, startin' out in a blizzard, bucks that awful cold across two mountain ranges for two days an' two nights—in pay for a bite of grub an' a few kind words.

You never can tell. Some folks ain't so crazy as they look.

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TO A FINISH

by LOUIS DODGE

WHEN you got to the end of the island, there was a sort of rampart of bluffs from which you could look down upon a strip of beach. Before you, on a clear day, you could see the mountains of north Borneo, far across a strip of sea. A series of uneven steps had been worn into the bluffs by the elements so that the soldiers could descend without any more effort or danger than was agreeable to most of them and stand on that strip of beach where the tides came in and went out with slow, implacable power.

It was on this strip of beach that the two men met to fight.

They were Flynn and Pemberton of H Company, and they were accompanied by half a dozen of their comrades who meant to see that the fight was conducted in accordance with the rules and traditions of the regiment. The cause of the fight? A word, a glance—what real cause is needed when many men of many types are thrown close together and there isn't much work to be done? H Company had been taking it easy—too easy, perhaps—since the battalion came down from Manila and were stationed on those little Mohammedan islands where the natives came and went furtively, curiously, making few signs that they were either friends or foes.

Still, it was ten to one that Flynn had been to blame. It was in the nature of things that he should have been. He was a short chunk of a chap—it had always been a mystery to the taller men in the company how he had ever gotten past the recruiting-sergeant in San Francisco. He was short and chunky, and every ounce of him was as pugnacious as it was generous. When the company lined up, he was the last man in the rear rank; yet he stood in his place as if he were the keystone of the company—of the regiment—of the Army.

Pemberton was, on the other hand, a veritable sphinx for silence and modesty and inscrutability: a placid creature, above the average height and long-limbed. It was not among his needs that life should be lived at a high pitch always. He could sit and ponder and listen, with eyes, into which comprehension came slowly and pleasantly, roving about him as if he found the whole world friendly and good.

THE tide was out when the antagonists faced each other and threw their campaign hats away in the general direction of the bluffs. There was no other preparation to make—though it was noted that Flynn shortened his belt by one notch, without removing his burning eyes from Pemberton's. A lookout had been stationed up at the top of the bluffs to give warning of the apparoach of non-coms. or officers. The stage was set.

Flynn was the first to move, of course. He dashed forward with the impetus of a boulder from a catapult. Instantly he was hitting with right and left, his head taking

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refuge between his shoulders. And for the first moment or two his blows were going home—though he was not a scientific boxer, but only a compact mass of pugnaciousness.

A man lacking in stamina must have gone down before him instantly. But Pemberton did not go down. As a fighter he was an unknown quantity to the other men. They remembered him up on Luzon, in the days of the Tondo district outside of Manila, when he had maintained a certain placid demeanor, as of a rustic sage, during moments of flame and assault. But no one had ever seen him angry. He was a good chap, by common consent. But was he a fighter?

With his long arms he parried blows that fell bewilderingly. He seemed awkward, annoyed. Little by little his eyes began to narrow, and his lips straightened. He kept his eyes on Flynn with an expression of indignant inquiry. And presently he launched a blow during which his arm described the course of that of a rangy baseball-pitcher. The blow fell nowhere; yet the soldiers lined up in the shade of the bluffs suddenly looked at one another and smiled grimly.

Little Flynn saw his opportunity when that blow went wild. His flail-like jabs came swiftly, and Pemberton's face began to bleed.

There was no time kept; there were no rounds. The first pause came when Flynn, after ten minutes of explosive movement, stepped back a pace and drew the length of his forefinger across his forehead and dashed the sweat from it. It was very hot, even in the shade of the bluffs. His chest was rising and falling rapidly. His bristling hair seemed to stand on end.

Pemberton uttered the first words which had passed getween them since they had descended to the beach. His voice was drawling, with a note very like conciliation in it—

"Getting tired?"

Flynn's response was characteristic. Without a word he dashed forward, a relentless fury personified. His fists found Pemberton's face again—once, twice, thrice. And, again, Pemberton seemed to gather his wits under the disadvantage of blinding blows, and his long right arm rose and receded and came forward with a sort of side-wheel movement. And this time his blow landed.

Flynn tottered back with an almost comical effect of not being able to touch the earth with his feet squarely. He had not regained his balance when he reached the edge of the water, and there he fell heavily, with a great splash.

Said Pemberton:

"I ought to have made you repent before I baptized you. I'll attend to the rest of it from now on."

Then he took advantage of a brief respite and stepped to the water's edge and sought to bathe his bruised and bleeding face. But Flynn was on him again instantly, and the fight was resumed.

None of the witnesses could have told how much time passed, though it was noted after a long while that a shaft of shade across the bar, thrown by a coconut-palm up on the bluff, moved inch by inch until it was gone. And by that time Flynn was breathing in a tortured fashion, and a kind of sickly hue had replaced the ruddiness of his face. But he continued to eye Pemberton fearlessly and even savagely, though his blows were fewer and less powerful than they had been.

Pemberton was showing much better form than his antagonist, despite his swollen face. He was breathing almost evenly. Plainly, he had no intention of assuming the offensive—unless, perhaps, it was his plan to deliver a knock-out blow at the end. He was content to ward off Flynn's blows, using his long arms as barriers. It was only when he was too hard-pressed that he struck back with that deliberate, powerful blow which had caused the men who looked on to catch their breath.

And then the truth was made plain to the spectators. Pemberton, good chap that he was, wished to spare the impetuous Flynn as much as possible. He was waiting for Flynn to tire himself out—to offer to call the fight a draw. He was suffering keenly in mind rather than in body. He could not abandon the fight; if he did, the company would always look upon him as a coward, a quitter. And he simply would not use all his power against Flynn.

By winning decisively he would gain nothing save that the fellows would always point out that he was a bigger man than Flynn, after all, and that his victory was no credit to him. And, besides, he liked Flynn. He had always smiled at Flynn's hot-headedness, and had always looked after him with pleased, approving eyes when he moved cockily down the company street.

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He didn't want to humiliate Flynn. That was the truth which was borne gradually into the minds of those who watched.

But Flynn's moment of humiliation seemed to be coming speedily, just the same. He was completely winded. His blows had lost almost all their force. His eyes expressed bewilderment. What was the matter with him, anyway?

And then there was heard a troubled voice—the voice of the lookout up on the bluffs:

"Hey, fellows! Sancho Panza's coming!"

Sancho Panza was the first sergeant.

Flynn looked up with a suspicious eye. That fellow up there was trying to save him from the inevitable end.

"You're a liar!" he shouted.

But the lookout wasn't a liar. The fight had to be called. Each man down under the bluffs assumed an idle and guileless manner. They all appeared to be looking for sea-shells. The first sergeant was really coming.

II

ALONG the path through the jungle marched Flynn, alone. He was going inland a distance of some five miles to carry a message to the men of another company. During the closing moments of the fight between Flynn and Pemberton the day before, a mail-boat had been sighted, nosing its way along the coast toward that island where the Americans were stationed. Sancho Panza had seen it.

It was the approach of the mail-boat which had brought him down to the bluff beneath which the two men were fighting. And, when it had arrived in the little harbor, the good news was circulated: the paymaster, a month late, had come down from Manila with his treasure-box and its guard of soldiers. And now Flynn was going inland to notify the company stationed there to come out of the jungle to meet the paymaster.

That company stationed inland were guarding a spring—the island's water supply—against the ingenious tricks of the Mohammedan children who peopled the island and who looked upon the American invaders with disfavor.

By rights, Flynn should not have gone alone. There should have been a detail. But Flynn had scoffed at the idea that he couldn't safely go alone, and the first sergeant had yielded. After all, the natives had been behaving very well. And, moreover, Flynn was a wideawake fellow, and the path he had to take had been broadened and made plain.

Flynn's argument, when he stood in the presence of the first sergeant, was concise and persuasive. Said he:

"Ten to one I'll not meet an *amigo* coming or going. And what if I do? They'd run if you made a face at them."

To Flynn all the natives, from northern Luzon down to the neighborhood of the Straits Settlements—from the head-hunters and Igorrotes to the Sikhs and Turcos who were occasionally to be met—were *amigos*. He didn't know what the word meant. He only knew that the strange conglomeration of black and brown and bronze and yellow men of the archipelago knew that one word, *amigo*, and that, when they encountered an American, every mother's son of them pointed to his breast, whether it was naked—as it usually was—or marvelously clad in high-colored raiment—as was mostly the case with the Mohammedans—and said—

"Me *amigo*."

Which being interpreted means, "I am a friend"—which he generally wasn't.

Flynn ought to have been thinking of the work in hand as he trod that silent path through the jungle—but he was not. With his rifle flung carelessly across his shoulder, he was thinking of yesterday's fight with Pemberton. He envied Pemberton. Such arms and such staying power! But he envied him for yet another reason. Why was it that he, Flynn, must needs be forever getting into a fight, while Pemberton, without having to insist unduly upon his rights, was always at peace?

He was a fine fellow, Pemberton. That habit he had of going away by himself to some place of solitude—always to be followed by some one or other, and always by the best fellows in the outfit. They felt less alone and abandoned in their strange corner of the earth if they might talk to him. And his habit of sitting on the canteen wall with his bottle of beer beside him and singing softly. . . .

Flynn recalled Pemberton's one fragment of a song, which he had sung from Cavite to Jolo, on sea-walls and on guard and on hikes—

'Twas on a Summer evening as a sentry I did stand;
I met a pretty damsel and I took her by the hand.

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Flynn could hear the amiable, drawling voice, with a touch of real music in it.

If he had not been thinking of Pemberton, he would have noticed, more than likely, that at one point along the path a certain spider-like enterprise was going forward. With infinite cunning a vine that clambered up a tree and over a clump of bushes was being woven into a sort of screen by the side of the path. It must have been noticeable to any man with an eye for nature's architectural masterpieces—or for the imitations thereof. But Flynn passed without noting.

He saw nothing save the occasional *nipa* hut, nestling among distant palms, with a woman sitting squat on the floor, weaving one of those mats which the soldiers were always ready to buy.

And so it was that he passed without seeing the cunning screen, half-finished; and after he had delivered his message and was returning, he manifested no special wariness as he neared the place where the woven vines formed a network which hid the adjacent spaces in the jungle from his view.

Nevertheless, just as he was passing the point where the screen stood, he sprang forward—from a motive which probably had its foundation largely in instinct. He could not remember afterward that he had heard anything. But it was borne in upon him that he was in danger, and he sprang forward and turned—to see a group of natives closing in upon him.

They afforded a truly dismaying spectacle: lithe, silent creatures with highly-colored turbans on their heads—like bloody bandages; exposed, discolored teeth, filed down to sharp points; bare feet of great swiftness, and bare arms of a steel-like hardness. They had sprung from behind the screen of vines, and the foremost among them had made a slashing pass with his bolo across the small of the white man's back—and had missed by the fraction of an inch. They all held their wicked knives in readiness; and, because that first blow had failed, they were now impelled by the fear of consequences if they did not overcome their victim instantly.

Flynn would never have admitted that he ran. He would have said that he used skirmisher's tactics.

He dashed along the path—which declined sharply just at this point—with the idea of placing between himself and the natives a sufficient space in which to work. Despite his stocky build, he was the quickest man in his outfit. If he had chosen to stand and fight, he knew very well that he could have stopped two or three of his assailants with the butt of his rifle; but he couldn't have stopped all of them, and it wasn't his intention to sell his life, even at a high price. But, given a fair working distance, he could begin pumping steel bullets into the attacking force without any real risk to himself.

Yes—but how to acquire what he considered a "fair working distance"? As he dashed down the curving path before him, he knew quite well that the natives continued to be only a step behind him. He felt, frantically, that it was impossible to gain an inch.

In a flash the possibility of running all the way back to the garrison occurred to him, but he knew such a feat was beyond him. He had realized during that fight yesterday that short-windedness was one of the defects with which he must reckon hereafter; and besides, he had a rifle to carry—unless he chose to throw it away, which he never would have done—while his pursuers carried weapons whose weight was comparatively nothing. It came to him swiftly that one of them might let fly his bolo as he ran.

It wouldn't do to continue to run. He must make a stand. Two or three thrusts with his rifle-butt, a native or so with a smashed skull—that might put an end to his predicament. The remaining natives would be more than likely to take to the jungle if he could stop one or two of their number.

But he did not turn and make a stand. At the moment of considering this desperate course, he realized that he was approaching a point where the path crossed a stone bridge—doubtless the work of Spanish engineers laboring many years—perhaps a century—ago. The bridge had been made necessary by a winding ravine, quite dry now, which carried a frothy torrent to the sea during seasons of heavy rains. And the sides of the ravine might be used as an excellent barricade by the harassed soldier if he could reach the bridge and leap from it a good two or three steps ahead of his pursuers.

III

A CHANCE had been given him: such was his conclusion. With redoubled, desperate energy he dashed down the path. A flying leap and he was in the ravine—badly shaken but

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uninjured. And then his heart bounded high with hope. The bridge was penetrated from side to side by a tunnel some three feet in diameter. He might have known the tunnel was there. Otherwise the bridge would have been merely a dam, to block the water and to be pushed away when the force of the stream accumulated.

With the quickness of a rabbit he darted into the tunnel, dragging his rifle with him. He had attained what seemed a position of safety just as the natives plunged down the sides of the ravine. He heard them, though he had now attained a position from which they were invisible. It occurred to him that they must have realized he was no longer wholly at a disadvantage. They could approach him, now, only one at a time—and what was one native against a soldier, driven and at bay?

He lay panting and waiting; and, when he realized that he was in a cramped position, he sought to remedy this by assuming a sitting posture. He inspected his rifle to be sure that he should be ready for any emergency. And then he made a paralyzing discovery: there wasn't room to turn his piece end for end!

If the natives approached him from one direction—well and good; but if they approached him from another he would be helpless.

He heard them at that moment scrambling up the side of the ravine again, and for an instant his heart stopped beating. Had they realized what his limitations were? And were they already planning an onslaught from the other mouth of the tunnel?

In a moment or two an answer came, seemingly. There was no sign of approach from his vulnerable side. Instead, an ominous silence fell. He could even fancy that his foes had thought better of their murderous design and gone away. In his direct and instinctive way he had analyzed the outstanding characteristic of their race. They were bloodthirsty—never a doubt of that, but they were cowardly. They knew how to attack swiftly, relentlessly, from a hidden vantage-ground, but they had no stomach for combat with a white man who held them with his eye.

The silence continued: a silence which hinted not only of inactivity, but of deserted spaces. It extended up and down the ravine and away into the jungle. Should he venture out and on his way?

He crept cautiously to the near end of the tunnel and listened again. There was a rush of wind down the ravine: an almost weird sound, as if nature meant to convey to him a warning. He leaned slightly forward from his place the better to survey his surroundings.

A spear descended swiftly from the bridge above and struck fire from the rocks below. Its point grazed his scalp and was deflected by his skull. In an incredibly short time his face was drenched with blood.

He cursed softly and drew back, wiping the blinding blood from his face. That was their game, then—to wait until he came out!

Well, he wouldn't come out. And, when he failed to return to the garrison within a reasonable time, some of the fellows would be sent out to find him. Sancho Panza would probably be worrying about him in any case. If only the fiends up overhead failed to realize that he was in a position to meet their attack only from one direction!

As the minutes passed, he began to feel assured. The natives knew nothing about a rifle. They had never held one in their hands. They wouldn't be quite sure whether it was an engine that worked from both ends or from only one. The northern Filipinos would have known, but not these Mohammedans. He had only to wait until some of the fellows came to his aid.

Another silent interval of waiting and then another dismaying revelation. A moving object at the far end of the tunnel caught his eye. A spear with a dry faggot impaled on its point was lowered across his range of vision and deposited on the bed of the ravine. The spear was withdrawn—and lowered again, again with a fagot at its point. This process was repeated until a neat little foundation of fagots was laid. Then larger pieces were lowered, one after another.

Flynn watched, fascinated. It was long before he guessed what this deliberate preparation meant. Then there was another interval of inaction. There were sinister whispers up above, now, and one of the natives seemed to be making ready to go away. Another long interval and then voices again. A pale yellow fluid began to trickle from the bridge above to the fagots below. The native who had gone away had come back! Flynn rightly concluded that this pale fluid was coconut-oil, brought from a near-by hut.

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Again a spear was brought into use: this time with an oil-soaked, flaming fagot at its point. This was added to the heap of fagots below—and a flame leaped forth. A fitful wind was blowing, and it immediately brought to the trapped man the odor of burning oil.

Even yet Flynn scarcely grasped the meaning of it all. But, when larger timbers were thrown down upon the foundation of fire, he understood. Great flames would be arising presently, and the wind would blow them into the tunnel. They meant to burn him out!

There was no longer the hope of relying upon stratagems now. He must leave the tunnel at no matter what risk. He must put up a fight, no matter what the odds against him.

He crept noiselessly to the end of the tunnel opposite that leaping flame. Perhaps they had forgotten to guard that end? He extended the end of his rifle with his campaign hat sitting rakishly upon it.

A spear descended like the jaw of a trap!

It was all quite plain, then. Both ends of the tunnel were guarded, and he had only to appear at either end to be butchered without even catching a glimpse of his murderer.

His comment to himself was typical, and it would have seemed measurably true—

"Well, I'll be ——!"

He relaxed in his place almost limply. For a moment he neglected that trickle of blood which worked its way into his eyes and his mouth. And then of a sudden his whole body moved with a shocked rebelliousness. A long tongue of flame had outrun its fellows and reached him from its place at the tunnel's mouth. It fell like a spray across his hand. Another touched his cheek and ear. Then the caprice of the wind served him. The flame sought another direction, and for a moment the tunnel was smokeless and cool.

He tried to deliberate—he had never learned to deliberate under even the most helpful conditions. Would the flames extend their reach until they shot entirely through the tunnel? Or was there a limit to their reaching power? Would they attain their greatest force presently, or was there hope of a sufficient respite to give the fellows back at the garrison time to come to his rescue?

The wind changed, and again the flames came roaring into the tunnel. They did not quite reach him at first, but they showered him with sparks which stung like hornets. The heat become intense now. And then, again, a flame licked his flesh.

Well, he must get out—that was clear. And then simultaneously two forces worked together for his salvation. First, the wind wheeled so that the tormenting heat was withdrawn for a moment. But of far greater hope was a sound that reached him, seemingly far away.

It was a human voice—the voice of Pemberton. It was singing: drawlingly, idly, as if vast spans of pleasant hours lay all about. And the words were:

'Twas on a Summer evening as a sentry I did stand;
I saw a pretty damsel and I took her by the hand.

There was the simultaneous scramble of feet overhead, too, and Flynn knew that the natives were gone.

He emerged from his place like a bolt, all his ferocity stirred, all his doubts dispelled. He was not thinking of Pemberton. He was thinking of the fiends who had so nearly destroyed him. His rifle was held hip-high, his hands at the bolt. Where had they gone?

And then he knew. Pemberton, rounding a curve in the path, had just emerged into view. And, crouching behind a low rampart of shrubs, the natives were waiting for him. They had withdrawn their attention from Flynn. Perhaps they believed he had not heard the voice of that other American who was approaching. Perhaps they believed he would remain in his place, unknowing that help was at hand.

He yelled once: piercingly, terribly. And, when the natives sprang to their feet, ready for flight, he lifted his rifle and fired. One lithe, swarthy body fell sprawling. He fired again. Another fell—fell, and scrambled to his hands and feet, arose and fell again, quivering throughout the length of his body. But the others were gone.

HE EXPLAINED to Pemberton what the matter was.

Pemberton frowned slowly.

"You shouldn't have come alone," he said. "I told them so."

It did not appear just whom it was that he had told. They went together and inspected the bodies of the dead natives, and, because the sight was not a pretty one, they moved together in the direction of the garrison. Pemberton added—

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"I thought it wouldn't be out of place for me to take a walk this way."

He looked at Flynn with hidden solicitude. He covertly took in the blisters on Flynn's hands and face and the black streaks where the blood was drying. He did not comment upon these. And presently there was a faint beam in his eyes, because Flynn was walking with the old familiar cockiness—as if he hadn't been in danger at all—as if there weren't any dangers, so far as he was concerned.

Flynn must have detected that beam in the other's eyes, for he stopped abruptly, and his hair seemed to bristle anew.

"By the way," he said, "we didn't get to finish up yesterday. This is a pretty good place here. What do you say?"

It was Flynn's idea of doing the honorable thing.

But Pemberton only looked at him wonderingly and with a ripple of friendly mirth in his eyes. He reached for Flynn's hand, and, when it was given to him, he jerked his thumb in the direction of the garrison as a signal that it was in that direction they were to walk—like comrades.

He said—

"Oh, you go to ——!"

And that was all either of them had to say.

An ECHO from the DESERT

by LEON H. WILSON

AS THE late June sun cast its rosy radiance over the tops of the hills that form the Kawich Range, "Bull" Carson turned his head toward his partner and rubbed his eyes. His companion was still asleep. Rising to a sitting posture, he gazed long and earnestly at the mesa that spreads out from the southern extremity of the range—a wild, desolate mixture of boulders and sand and cactus, with occasional Joshuas rising like vigilant sentries guarding their domain from the trespass of human feet. A matter of ten miles to the south and west he could see the burning rays scattering the night shadows from the purple slopes of contemptible little Mt. Block.

Cautiously Carson removed himself from the crude bed and slowly dressed. He was a giant of a man in the very flood-tide of life; he was hardly a day past thirty-five, towering fully two inches over six feet, with massive, slightly stooped shoulders and powerful limbs. His neck, thick and red, easily suggested the sobriquet of "Bull," and the thick, tousled, black hair and untrimmed beard gave him a rather sinister appearance, moderately relieved by the prominent nose—a nose that would inspire an artist when he beheld the cherry-colored shading resulting from the combined action of the sun and frequent libations of high-proof liquor.

A stranger would be inclined to smile at the spectacle of Bull Carson clumsily attempting to do anything; that is, until he saw the man's eyes, which were large and bluish-gray and showed an unusual portion of the whites. Then, as he watched their rapidly shifting expression, the humor of the situation would suddenly be chilled.

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Ordinarily Carson was not the first to arise. But this morning, as he quietly moved about with awkward carefulness, every action seemed pregnant with a hidden significance. After a perfunctory washing of face and hands, he softly approached the bed he had just vacated, listened intently to the sleeping man's labored breathing; then, reaching under the edge of the bottom canvas, he brought forth an ancient repeating rifle and made for a huge boulder a hundred yards from camp.

Here, with a rapid movement of the lever, he extracted the cartridges from the magazine, picked them up and, quietly retracing his steps, replaced the gun in its former resting-place. Then he gathered a handful of dead sage-brush twigs, made a fire between two smoke-blackened, flat rocks and began breakfast preparations.

When the coffee and the bacon and beans, warming in a pan, showed signs of being ready, Carson stood erect and again gazed long and anxiously over the mesa to the southwest.

"I gotta do it," he muttered. "I kin strike out across Gold Flat to Thirsty Cañon an' come out near Springdale. It's a —— of a country, but I oughta make it in three days, an' I might git in on the ground floor at Rhyolite."

The coffee was now boiling.

"Hey, 'Stubby,'" he called to the sleeping man, "eats is ready."

James Hazen Stubblefield, better known as "Stubby," stirred and blinked his eyes. Throwing back the blankets with a reluctant yawn, he scrambled into his boots and drew in several deep drafts of invigorating morning atmosphere. He was the exact antithesis of the man at the campfire. Short of stature and over fifty years of age, if the mute testimony of the thin gray locks and scraggy beard can be relied upon, he presented a striking contrast to his partner. In one respect, and one only, was there the least similarity between the two men, and this appeared on Stubby's snub nose—which bore a more intense shade of crimson than Carson's, if such a thing were possible.

Concluding his morning toilet by thrusting his fingers through the scanty wisps of hair, he sniffed critically at the pleasing aroma of the breakfast floating in the air and seated himself, tailor-fashion, beside the canvas upon which were arrayed the edibles.

The meal was commenced in a constrained silence. The absolute indifference which each displayed toward the presence of the other disclosed a lack of harmony between the two men, for true fellowship does not hide behind long faces and furtive glances. The breakfast had about vanished when the younger man spoke.

"Stubby," he began in a deep voice, "we might as well have a understandin' an' be done with it. What are we goin' to do? Stay here and dry rot or move on over to the next range where we got a chance? There's nothin' here—that's a cinch."

"Looky here, Bull. If we could find that ledge, we'd be rich men in no time, even if it waren't over four inches wide. But 'twas twenty inches or better an' cropped on the surface three or four times inside a hun'red yards when I found it five years ago, an' it ain't any smaller now. Besides, even if it waren't a mine and pinched out in six shots, we could peddle it fer a good chunk of dough with all these booms goin' on in this part of the country."

Stubby's high-pitched voice carried a world of conviction. Camouflage in speech or action was an unknown quantity to this simple, old desert-wanderer, and his reply had little obvious effect upon Carson, who had set about washing the dishes. He appeared like a man who had evolved some secret plan of action and was determined to see that plan carried out; the futile logic of an old prospector notwithstanding.

"'Tain't no use," said Carson after several minutes had elapsed. "'Tain't no use to go on like we done the last two weeks. We've hunted for your pipe-dream ledge for two months, an' we ain't got no more ledge than a jack-rabbit, an' I'm sick'n tired of pickin' this here ground over 'n over when I know there ain't nothin' here."

Stubby rose to his feet, his eyes sparkling with an ominous light.

"Yuh mean ter tell me I'm a liar?" he demanded. "Do yuh think I'd come back here if I hadn't found a ledge? Didn't I knock off a sample an' bring it in, an' didn't it run over two hun'red an' sixty dollars a ton? Do yuh think——"

"No! No!" interrupted Carson. "I ain't sayin' anything like that, but you

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know you might 'a' made a mistake; they happen sometimes. Say, I got a scheme. 'Spose we pack up an' drift over to the Reveille Range for four or five days, an', if we don't find nothin', we kin come back an' look for your ledge. The change of pasture will do us good. You see, that is what's the matter with us; we been too long in one place. What you say?" His tone was highly conciliatory.

"That's a bet," replied Stubby, glad to effect a compromise.

"Well, then, let's get started. You go bring up the fleet while I begin packin'." And Carson commenced gathering up the cooking-utensils.

FROM an arroyo two hundred yards away the faint tinkle of a bell betrayed the presence of the burros, and, as Stubby departed to round up the animals, his partner heaved a sigh of relief. He was no sooner out of sight, however, before Carson was a beehive of industry. He immediately took some of the cold beans and the two slices of bacon that remained of the breakfast and carefully wrapped them in a piece of old newspaper. This done, he concealed the package with a canteen of water behind a clump of sage-brush a short distance from the fire-place and fell to work with such nervous energy that, when Stubby returned with the burros, everything was ready to load upon their patient backs. In thirty minutes this task was also completed.

"Well," remarked Stubby after he had made sure that nothing had been overlooked, "let's go."

"Not yet, Stubby, I wantta tell you something."

The old prospector wheeled about with a look of astonishment as Carson fumbled in the inside pocket of his coat, which had hung loosely over the top of one of the packs.

"We don't hit it off very good; so I got 'nother plan. This here outfit ain't worth more 'n a couple hundred bucks. Now, I got three thousand shares of Mohawk stock, an' it's worth eight or ten cents a share. I'm a-goin' to give you the stock an' take the outfit; you're gettin' the best of it at that. Over there by that sage-brush you'll find enough grub an' water to last you till you get to Goldfield. Course, I'm sorry you gotta hike——"

The look of amazement on the rugged countenance of Stubby changed to one of purple indignation. His rising temperature made it difficult for him to be coherent.

"What do yuh mean?" he blurted out. "Do yuh think you're goin' ter give me the double-cross an' steal my outfit? I own every strap of it, an' yuh can't slip me any milk-an'-water stock fer my stuff without me havin' somethin' ter say about it!"

As if utterly unconscious of every word that Stubby voiced, Carson laid the stock certificates upon a boulder and again delved into the pocket of the coat. This time he produced a rather worn envelope and with the stub of a pencil began scribbling.

"This here is a bill of sale an'——"

He paused and, lifting his eyes, gave an involuntary sidewise lurch, for he was staring straight into the gaping muzzle of Stubby's rifle, which the old man had stealthily removed from the nearest animal while Carson was executing his bill of sale.

"Stick 'em up, yuh horse-thief!" shouted Stubby as he again leveled the gun between Bull's startled eyes.

Then the frightened expression melted into one of leering amusement as he remembered that the magazine was empty, and he thanked his guiding star for his foresight in preparedness. Vaguely he wondered, as he observed the strained, determined cast of Stubby's features, if the old man would really shoot. Finally he laughed—a low, hoarse snort of derision.

"Lay down that coyote-killer, you old——"

"Yuh got one more chanct, Bull, ter stick 'em up!" grimly remarked the outraged Stubby. "We'll see who hikes ter Goldfield!"

His voice was hard and menacing as he squinted along the barrel at Carson's right shoulder.

There was an instant fraught with penetrating suspense. Still the other grinned—a sneering, mocking smile of contempt. *Click* went the hammer. There was no report. Hastily Stubby recocked the weapon and pressed the trigger—with the same result. Then, as he realized how he had been outwitted, his rage and humiliation surged beyond control. Quickly reversing the rifle, he swung it in a wide arc and hurled it with all his strength at the head of his erstwhile partner. But the

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effort was in vain; the latter merely ducked, and the missile flew harmlessly over his head.

"Cut that out, you old fool!" bellowed Carson.

But the battle-lust was raging in Stubby's blood at white heat, and his eyes blazed with impotent fury. He, who had endured the hardships of the desert for twenty-five years, could not stand passively by and let another feloniously appropriate that which rightfully belonged to him. Therefore, having failed in his first attempt to block Carson from carrying out his plan of forcible exchange, he seized a stone lying at his feet and again bombarded his enemy. This time he was nearly successful; the stone grazed its mark and tilted the hat from Carson's head.

It had not been in the latter's mind to injure the old fellow, but he had not counted on such belligerent resistance. And now, as he perceived Stubby grasping a still larger rock, he realized that victory, even if not a bloodless one, depended on instant action. With a bound he closed the little distance between them, his left hand raised as a shield against the impending blow. As he reached Stubby, Bull loosed his right arm in a wild, desperate swing at the head and, as the heavy fist crashed against the old man's jaw, he crumpled under the impact and stretched his length upon the sand.

Carson recovered his balance. Then, as his glance fell upon the apparently inanimate form of his conquered adversary, whose honest, blue eyes were fixed in a glassy stare into the azure dome of the sky, he was seized with a sickening, gripping fear. What if he had killed him? Hurriedly he knelt beside the prostrate body and placed his ear to Stubby's breast, fervently hoping that the spark of life still glowed within. But no perceptible heaving of the chest nor pulsating heart-throb rewarded his examination. The body was rigid.

"Jumpin' Jupiter!" he exclaimed. "I've killed him! I've killed him!" A cold clammy perspiration oozed from his pores. "But they'll never find him in this here devilish place. Gee, now I'm in a fine jam, but it ain't any use crying!"

Possessed of a feverish desire to get away from the dread presence of death, he ran to one of the burros and, loosening the lash-rope, removed an old, time-worn blanket. With precipitate haste he threw it over Stubby's remains and anchored the corners with rocks; not omitting, however, to extract a good-sized plug of chewing tobacco from the left-hand hip pocket of Stubby's overalls. Then, with a farewell glance at his former partner, he retrieved the rifle, readjusted the packs and with a hoarse, "Git out of here," started in the direction of Gold Flat.

A HALF hour later something moved beneath the blanket. First there occurred a short series of gentle undulations; then came a violent upheaval, and the hatless head and shoulders of the dazed Stubby emerged from the shroud. His mind was still confused, and the surrounding scenery whirled about him in a kaleidoscopic maze. His last impression had been of a sudden shower of stars and a yawning pit, but now he was conscious of two things: a choking thirst and a sharp, throbbing pain in his jaw. He shut his eyes and clamped both hands to his head, and for ten or fifteen minutes he sat motionless and bareheaded in the burning sun, striving to collect his scattered senses.

At last he opened his eyes and scrambled unsteadily to his feet. Everything was plain to him now, for Carson and the animals were nowhere in sight; he was marooned on the desert.

With the dawning of a full realization of his present plight, he remembered the rations and water that Carson had mentioned. He made his way slowly to the spot and found them behind the sage-brush. Lifting the canteen, he unscrewed the top and drank a long, delicious draft of the tepid liquid; after which he seated himself upon a boulder to ponder the situation over.

Stubby had had many partners in a lifetime of prospecting: good, bad and indifferent. But never before had he associated with one who had proved himself such a perfidious ingrate, and his childish faith in the male element of the human race was sadly shaken. He had met Carson in a Goldfield saloon, and, when his new acquaintance evinced a deep interest in his humorous and tragic tales of the desert, a sort of spontaneous friendship sprang up between them, greatly stimulated by

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a mutual fondness for wet refreshments.

Carson had wandered in with the rush from the East and candidly admitted that he knew little or nothing of prospecting, but the shrewd Stubby had seen great possibilities in his huge frame, which he secretly envied. So, when the old man had extended an open-hearted invitation to accompany him on a trip in search of a rich outcrop he had discovered a few years previous in the Kawich Range east of Goldfield, Carson had accepted with surprizing alacrity.

But their quest had been fruitless, and Carson's slothful habits had made him more of an incumbrance than an asset to the ambitious Stubby. He loafed continually about the camp and so tried Stubby's even temper that at last he had been forced to make a mild protest—at which Carson had flown into a rage and heaped upon him a torrent of cutting sarcasm. Daily the breach had widened, and Carson became sullen and morose.

Stubby arose from the boulder and gazed at the thin, bluish haze that hung like a faint mist over the vast reaches of the mesa. Raising his clenched right hand in the air, he gave verbal vent to the pent-up desire for vengeance that welled within him.

"Bull Carson, you're the most murderous, good-fer-nothin' rat I ever seen, an', when yuh see me comin', yuh better sidestep in jig-time—'cause I'm goin' ter kill yuh—if I swing fer it!"

But he was wasting precious moments. Gathering up his parcel of grub and the half-empty canteen of water, he prepared to leave. Then his eye chanced upon the stock certificates and the bill of sale just as Carson had left them. Fairly seething with passion at the sight of them, he snatched them up and crushed them into his left hip pocket, whereupon he discovered the loss of his tobacco.

"—— him!" he spluttered. "An' he stole my chewin', too!"

But the pain in his jaw precluded any possibility of his enjoying a taste of the weed.

The position of the sun indicated ten o'clock as Stubby set out on his long, forty-mile hike to Goldfield. Patiently he plodded along in the intense heat until well into the afternoon, halting only occasionally for a few minutes' rest and a sip of the precious water. At four o'clock he attempted to appease his clamorous appetite with a handful of the beans, but his bruised maxillary ached so acutely that he gave up in disgust and continued on his weary way.

When eventide approached, he abandoned the idea of camping for the night, understanding full well that if he could not eat he would need every ounce of reserve energy he possessed. And in the coolness of the night he could make better headway. Besides, he was about out of water, and he feared to lie down lest his old limbs stiffen and be his undoing.

It was noon the next day when, footsore and nearly exhausted, he entered Goldfield. At the first thirst emporium he came upon, he stopped, purchased a two-bit drink of fiery, red liquor and with renewed strength made his way through the knots and throngs of gold-seekers and adventurers to his friend of twenty years' standing, "Old George" Holiday, who dealt the graveyard shift at the faro game in the Southern bar. With his left hand still pressed to his painful cheek, he poured out the story of his wrongs into his friend's sympathetic ears.

At its conclusion the face of Old George was hard and inscrutable, and a dangerous light flickered in the narrowed, steel-gray eyes. For George believed implicitly in Stubby and liked him even as a brother; therefore, as he shared Stubby's joys, he was likewise ready to avenge his wrongs. That day boded ill for Bull Carson when either or both of them should meet him.

"And so he left you this stuff?" remarked George as he examined the certificates.

"Yep, an', when he thought he had killed me, he high-graded my terbaker," moaned Stubby.

"Well," directed George as he transferred a twenty-dollar gold-piece to Stubby's palm, "you go up to Doc Smith and see if your jaw is cracked. If 'tis, you'll have to stick around a couple of months till it gets well. By that time I'll have enough to stake you to another outfit."

Stubby's eyes were suspiciously misty as he held out his gnarled right hand.

"George, I—I'll hit 'er good yet—an' when I do——"

"Sure you will," replied the optimistic George. "Now you beat it to the doctor."

"All right. But stick this cussed stuff in your deposit box. I hate the sight of it."

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As he handed the certificates and the bill of sale to his friend, he added as an afterthought, "Say, can't we sell it fer somethin'?"

Old George hesitated for a moment; then he answered with a rather mirthless smile—

"No; we'll put it in the morgue as a souvenir—of your adventures."

The physician confirmed George's suspicion. Stubby's jaw was fractured.

"Nothing very serious," he assured him, "but you'll have to be quiet and live strictly up to the prescribed diet. It'll be well-knit in about six weeks, and then you may eat solid food."

AT THE end of two months Old George had acquired three animals and a new outfit, and on the first of September Stubby departed from Goldfield, proudly riding an undersized mule and leading two heavily-burdened burros. He was headed for Death Valley to explore its mysterious recesses and awe-inspiring wastes; but this time he elected to go alone.

It seems ordained in the Book of Fate that some men should literally stumble upon their Golconda while others, following the same pursuit even more assiduously, are denied success. And the prospecting game affords a striking demonstration of this truth, for, where one strikes it lucky, nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine record a failure. And poor old Stubby appeared destined to be one of the nine thousand.

He worked hard and conscientiously early and late. Prospect after prospect he labored on for days and weeks, only to have his lead pinch out or lose its values. And thus he plucked and shoveled and blasted until he discovered that his supply of grub was rapidly diminishing and must be replenished if he desired to continue. And this would necessitate a trip to Goldfield.

So one morning late in January, 1906, Stubby packed. On the evening of the third day of dusty, wind-swept traveling, he arrived at the outskirts of Rhyolite and made camp just as the purple dusk became the starlit darkness of night.

Contrary to custom Stubby slept until sunup the next day, and his first thought on rising was breakfast. His constant diet of bacon and beans had grown decidedly irksome, and he was nauseated with the smell of his own cooking; besides, he hungered for fresh meat and vegetables and a piece of pie—yes, he would have pie for breakfast, too—lots of it.

But, as he ambled up toward the business section of the town, he glanced down the street that parallels the main thoroughfare and saw a group of men standing beside the six-horse team and covered spring wagon that served as a stage. And one among them was a monstrous, hulking giant with a familiar stoop. As Stubby's sharp eyes fell upon him, he experienced a sudden, exhilarating thrill of unholy joy, for, if his eyes deceived him not, he recognized the awkward figure of—Bull Carson.

Not for a minute while wandering amid the silence of Death Valley had he forgotten that eventful June day, the long, heart-breaking hike to Goldfield and the pain in his fractured jaw; the fires of revenge burned fiercely within the old man's breast.

He looked about him for a suitable instrument with which to deal a proper retribution. Unfortunately he did not pack a gun, and he dared not go in search of one lest his prey escape. But right at his feet he found the very thing—a broken piece of drill steel a trifle over a foot in length. And, with this firmly clasped in his right hand behind his back, he approached his enemy in a disinterested fashion.

Carson stood hunched over between two men with his hands in front of him. The three were standing with their backs toward him. The fourth member of the group stood a few feet in their rear and between Stubby and his intended victim, idly watching the driver loading some suitcases into the vehicle. Stubby advanced a few steps closer, veering slightly to the right in order to catch a glimpse of Carson's profile—for it would never do to make a blundering error in the execution of desert justice.

He was now within striking distance and entirely unnoticed. If only the fellow that stood so nearly in his way would move to one side. As if he had heard Stubby's unexpressed desire, the man stepped back a pace and drew out his watch.

Instantly Stubby's right arm shot back, stopped, and then, with all the power he could muster, it catapulted toward Carson's head. But the gentleman with the watch

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momentarily raised his eyes and evidently divined Stubby's intentions, for, with an agility that would have shamed a cat, he sprang forward and seized the old man's avenging arm and shoulder.

"Lemme alone! Lemme alone!" screamed the struggling Stubby.

With a violent lurch the weapon was twisted from his grasp.

"What do you mean, you old fossil, tryin' to bean a crazy man?" demanded his captor.

"He robbed me—stole—stole my outfit!" gasped the angry Stubby.

The two men beside Carson turned abruptly about at the sound of the fracas behind them, and a shudder of horror chilled Stubby's blood as he observed that Carson's handcuffed hands were manacled to the wrist of the deputy on his left. He knew they were deputies now; the shining emblems of authority pinned to their flannel shirts beneath the open coats were sufficeint evidence.

"What's all the rumpus, Jim?" asked Carson's consort of the one who had interrupted Stubby's operations.

"Oh, this old desert-rat has some grievance against this locoed sport and was trying to split his head with that piece of drill steel. I guess you're nuts, too," he added, turning to Stubby. "Why, that poor devil was found prancing about on the desert and plumb out of balance three days ago. Nobody knows how long he'd been floundering around. The doctors say he has hereditary insanity; that is, he's been crazy a long time. We're taking him to the bug-house now."

"Won't he ever git well?" asked the astounded Stubby.

"Nope. The pill-prescribers say that he's done for now, sure."

Stubby edged around in front of Carson. Not a flicker of recognition glimmered in his pathetic stare, and the blank expression on his features filled the old man with remorse. He backed away, turned around and made off in rather undignified haste.

"Vindictive old codger," remarked one of the officers as their gaze followed him.

Forgetful of the delayed breakfast, Stubby rounded the corner and shortly found himself in front of the mahogany of the "76" bar. He craved a stimulant to steady his nerves. Then, as he watched the beads on the liquor he had poured into his glass, another thought made him uneasy. The deputies and their charge would have to remain overnight in Goldfield, and suppose Old George should chance to meet Carson and plug him full of lead. It wasn't likely, yet . . . .

He had intended to rest this day in Rhyolite and leave on the morrow for Goldfield, but perhaps he yet had time to catch the stage and forestall any chance of Old George getting in bad with the law. Paying for his beverage, Stubby hurried to a livery-stable, made rapid arrangements for the care of his outfit and sped to the stage station. He arrived just in time to see the stage disappearing far up the road in a cloud of dust.

The following evening Stubby dismounted from the stage in Goldfield, tired and chilled. He even ignored a hearty desire for a little dram in his haste to see Old George. Not finding him in his usual up-town haunts, he tramped through the slush and mud to the latter's cabin at the extremity of Main Street, close by the rimrock of malapai that forms the northeast limits of the town. When Stubby, after a smart rap, burst through the door, he found Old George preparing a set of ham and eggs.

"Well, look who's here. What luck, Stubby?"

"Say, George, who do yuh think I seen yestidy in Rhyolite?" exploded Stubby.

"Can't guess. You'll have to spill it out," replied George.

And Stubby proceeded to spill it out. He referred briefly to his recent trip and the bitter disappointments he had encountered and then launched into the details of his meeting with Carson and the near-tragic part he had played.

"An' ter think I nearly crowned him with that piece of steel," he sadly concluded. "He must'a' been crazy all th' time."

George nodded and reached for his overcoat.

"I've got to go to work at ten," he announced. "You must be dead tired, so you better go to bed. See you tomorrow when I get done at two o'clock."

THE next morning, while George was sleeping, Stubby went up-town, where he met some old friends and made a few minor purchases. When he returned at one-thirty, George was already

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up, and soon the two were elbowing their way through the crowds to a little restaurant on Ramsey Street which George sometimes patronized. Here, from eight in the morning until after four in the afternoon, was the busiest part of Goldfield, the very center of the stock-gambling maelstrom. Excited streams of speculators flowed out of one brokerage office only to enter another, and messenger boys dashed madly hither and thither in endless succession.

With a nonchalance born of familiarity, Old George viewed the stirring scene until he glanced through one of the large, plate-glass windows of a brokerage firm shortly after they had turned the corner into Ramsey Street. Clutching Stubby by the shoulder, he came to a sudden halt.

"Say, Stubby, what's the name of that stock that Carson wished on you? Don't it sound like some kind of a hawk?" he asked eagerly as he watched a board-marker setting down a quotation.

A buzzing hum of incredulity floated through the partly open door.

"Er—why—I think it is Black Hawk. No-o it is Night Hawk. Blast me, George, if I know what 'tis. Why?"

"Why?" shouted George. "Because if it's Mohawk those three certificates of yours are worth more than sixty thousand dollars. It's quoted at better than twenty dollars a share right now. And you know what that means, Stubby, old boy. It means that little ranch down in the Owens River Valley that we have dreamed about for years. It means a comfortable home. It means freedom from this hand-to-mouth existence. It means——"

But George, out of breath and almost dragging an equally excited Stubby, was rapidly retracing his steps, battling his way through the surging crowds to the Southern bar and his safe-deposit box. Finally reaching his destination and the safe, he feverishly inserted and turned the key, pulled out a long, black tin box and opened it. From among other papers and bundles of worthless wild-cat stock he drew out a large, white envelope on which was inscribed in pencil—

J. H. Stubblefield, c/o George Holiday

He handed it to Stubby. With trembling fingers Stubby tore it open and extracted Carson's bill of sale and the three certificates—and it was Mohawk. He passed them silently to George with a feeble smile. One glance was enough for the latter's keen eyes, and, thrusting them back into Stubby's hand, he commanded—

"Come on before they close up."

"What we goin' ta do now?" asked Stubby.

"Sell it before the bottom drops out!" shouted George, who had had several bitter experiences in stock speculation.

The crowd in Thompson & Grinnell's luxuriously appointed offices was slowly thinning out as George and Stubby entered. It was nearly closing time. Mr. Grinnell, wearing his ever-present smile that had lured many profitable fish into his net, pleasantly greeted George; Stubby he did not know. Into his ear George whispered three magic words—"Mohawk—to sell," and they were instantly whisked into the "strictly private" office of the broker.

"How many shares, Mr. Holiday?" he inquired.

"Three thousand," answered George, taking the stock from Stubby's unsteady hand. "It belongs to my friend here, Mr. Stubblefield."

The broker whistled.

"Sixty-one thousand dollars net," he murmured after some rapid calculations.

Glancing at the certificates, he copied their numbers upon a pad and entered a noise-proof telephone booth. The two men waited an extremely long three minutes, at the end of which Grinnell emerged from the booth.

"They are all right," he announced. "The stock was originally issued to a party by the name of Dawson and by him transferred and registered on the company's books to one Calvin S. Carson. Have you an acknowledgment of the sale from him, Mr. Stubblefield?"

Stubby's hand flew into his coat pocket and brought forth the envelope on which was a record of their transaction and Carson's scrawling signature. As he offered it to the broker, a thin, folded slip fell out and fluttered to the floor. Stubby bent over and absently picked it up; then he curiously examined the writing he found upon it. And, as he slowly deciphered each word with labored effort, the exultant smile of joy faded away, and a lone, salty tear drifted on its solitary way down the bronzed cheek. This is what he read:

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Cedar Rock, Ill.,
March 21st, '05.

MY DEAR HUSBAND:

Your loving letter received yesterday, and I cried all the rest of the day. It is awful to think you are not doing well. And, Calvin dear, I simply can not send you any more money. The place is mortgaged now beyond redemption, and we will lose our home within the year if you are not successful at something.

I do wish you had been satisfied at home. Little Joe and Bess are both sick, and I'm nearly sick myself from work and worry. Please come home.

Will try to write a more cheerful letter as soon as I feel brighter.

Your loving wife,
ELIZABETH CARSON.

"How will you have it, Mr. Stubblefield, check or currency?"

The broker's voice sounded far away. Stubby roused himself with an effort.

"Certee-fied check fer the sixty thousand an' the rest cash."

In fifteen minutes the negotiations were completed. When Stubby and Old George stepped out of the broker's office into the street, the former had in his possession a certified check of large dimensions and a thousand dollars in gold. At the Wells Fargo office he paused.

"Wait here a minute, George; I got some more business ter 'tend ter." And, pressing Mrs. Carson's letter into George's hand, he entered the building.

His mission was accomplished in a few brief words.

"Wire this here check ter Mrs. Calvin S. Carson, Cedar Rock, Ill."

Gone were the dreams of the little ranch nestling snuggly in the shadow of the lofty Sierras. Gone were the visions of browsing cattle and beautiful green fields. But Stubby was happy with an inner-consciousness of having done a splendid thing. As he gathered up his receipt and rejoined the waiting George, his step was very elastic for an old man, and his heart sang with a nameless joy.

Silently they walked down the street and into the little restaurant. In the curtained privacy of a box Stubby produced the sack of gold and divided the shining twenty-dollar pieces into two even piles, one of which he pushed over to George.

"That's all's left," he remarked softly, "an' I dunno if yuh think I done right or not, but I shipped the rest of it ter—her. I know I should 'a' said somethin' ter yuh about it, seeing as we are pardners an' you've ben so all-fired good ter me, stakin' me time and agin'."

Stubby stopped and shot a questioning look at George, who nodded and heaved a gentle sigh, for he had read and understood.

"So yuh take that half an' try your luck, George, maybee yuh can win some time."

LATE that night, in the part of town where the lights shine brightest and the revelry is fast and furious long after midnight, Stubby danced and caroused in wild abandon. In the rear of one of those now deserted dance-halls, sprawled out on the floor in a maudlin stupor, George found him the next morning. He smiled as he gazed upon his fallen comrade with tender sympathy. Kneeling beside him, he gently shook the unconscious man.

"Stubby! Stubby!" he said in a suppressed, triumphant tone, "I've done it at last, sure enough! Wake up and listen! I didn't work last night! I bucked the tiger myself and beat the game in the Confidence to the tune of fourteen thousand dollars and——"

His words fell upon deaf ears.

"Call a messenger," he ordered the bartender.

A sleepy-eyed youngster answered the summons.

"Go up to the Southern," he explained as he slipped the lad a bright new gold-piece, "and tell 'Big Charlie' that I won't be there any more. Just say that Old George and his pardner Stubby will leave today for their ranch in the Owens River Valley."

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From BEHIND MASKS

A Two-Part Story
Part I

by
Gordon Young

Author of "Gaboreau," "Gaboreau the Terrible," etc.

WHAT immediately follows is, I suppose, in the nature of a prologue. But it is perhaps not the least dramatic part of my story; it is vitally related to all that follows, and it may convey to those who read some idea of how dangerous it was for me, Don Everhard, to force my way into the affair.

I must here depend a little on conjecture, though largely on facts and information that, as will be seen, came to me later.

It happens that many, especially the police, may know that Friedlander's was until recently perhaps the largest jewelry store in the city without a thoroughly modern burglar-proof—as if there were such a thing—safe.

Shortly before midnight not so very many months ago, a young man entered the alleyway behind Friedlander's and was confronted by heavy steel doors. Overhead and about the windows were barred grills. Some effort had been made to keep out those whom the management did not want to enter—particularly after business hours.

He was a rather tall, broad-shouldered young man. His eyes were dark, steady and intelligent. He had much that was confident in his bearing, but nothing of cunning. His face seemed frank with the bold frankness of a man unafraid and ready for almost any chance, and yet he was far from being in appearance the sort of person one would have suspected of carrying a suitcase filled with burglarious tools.

He seemed to be familiar with the alleyway and what he found there. The steel doors were, of course, nearly impenetrable, or at least the noise he would have made in blowing a way through them would have prevented his being free to operate after he had won a passage.

The windows at the rear were not only grilled but also stood some six or seven feet above the ground. The place was well protected—or fortified, rather. But he evidently knew what to expect. Without hesitation he walked some fifty feet up the alley and brought back a step-ladder. He had known right where to look for it.

He glanced at the illuminated face of his watch, mounted the ladder and applied a kind of jack between the grilling, forcing it apart. He stopped from time to time to listen and to look at his watch. After working for some time, he quickly got down, put the ladder back where he had found it, reclosed the suitcase and walked out of the alley, taking care to remain in the shadows.

Presently came the uniformed watchman employed by a detective agency to watch the stores in that vicinity throughout the night. He walked rapidly down the alley, shifting his electric torch right and left, pausing to try doors but obviously in a hurry. He noticed nothing out of the way and went on.

The young man with the suitcase waited until the watchman was gone; then he returned to his work. He had evidently been singularly well-informed as to the length of

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time it took the watchman to make his rounds. Of course something, almost anything, might have occurred to throw the watchman off his schedule; but, as night after night the patrolling was entirely perfunctory, one who planned well or had unusual information would be able to minimize the risk of being caught.

The young man worked rapidly. He exerted the jack until the grilling was in some places torn loose from its joints. When he had an opening large enough to crawl through, he broke the glass window. This was done with care that all the fragments of glass would fall inside the store. A wire mesh ran through the glass, but, using heavy gloves to protect his fingers and nippers to clip the wire, he soon cut his way through.

He then thrust the suitcase inside, lowering it carefully with a rope; after which, precariously perched, he drew up the step-ladder and lowered it also on the inside. The watchman might have been suspicious had the ladder been left standing there; though the watchman, sweeping his torch at locks where burglars might have tampered, or at dark corners where lurkers might be, would not be likely to glance upward at the broken window above his head.

The young man inside Friedlander's again looked at his watch; then he sat down and remained perfectly still. Presently the hurried footsteps of the watchman again making his rounds went by.

The young man went forward to the safe, above which a bright cluster of lights burned in the ceiling. Any one on the sidewalk could, by stopping a moment and peering through the plate glass, plainly see the safe front. It had been placed and the store arranged with that advantage in view. To the owner of the store it seemed cheaper and more secure than time-locks or electric alarms.

However, the young man, who had obviously been trained for this job, knew what he was about. He did not appear troubled at any time, unless it was by the weight of the two large mirrors that he half carried and half dragged to the safe and propped up so as to make a screen.

The mirrors faced toward the street door, caught the reflection of the cluster of lights overhead and cast back a picture of the pillars and cases. Of course, any one familiar with the interior arrangement of Friedlander's would have become suspicious at a glance; but the casual passerby would have noticed nothing out of the way—unless he stopped to give a careful scrutiny.

Behind the screen of mirrors the young man went to work with energy. He seemed to be something of an electrician and to have detailed information regarding the interior of the store. He ran out a length of wired cord and without the slightest hesitation made a connection with a socket in the manufacturing department. He knew precisely where to find the switch to give him a powerful flow of juice. Then he turned his drill into the steel. The safe face might as well have been made of cheese.

From time to time he applied oil and stopped to gage his progress, blowing away the tiny steel shavings and calculating the depth of the hole. When it seemed satisfactory, he jammed home a nitroglycerin cartridge and glanced at his watch. It was a quarter of one.

It might have been thought from his attitude that he was waiting for some one. He leaned with his shoulder against the safe and smoked a cigaret leisurely. After a time he went forward to the street door and attacked the lock. When he had forced it, he opened the door slightly and left it ajar.

He returned to the safe and consulted his watch. It was half past one.

An explosion!

The door of the safe swung slowly open as he tugged at it.

A touch of the drill to the lock of the boxes within the safe and they yielded.

IN HIS work he evidently grew careless, for he knocked over one of the mirrors that screened him. It fell with a mighty clatter, breaking and scattering into a thousand shimmering pieces on the tiled floor. He did not seem to notice.

He was bending over with his hands in a tray of gems when a policeman, stepping through the opened door, roared—

"Hands up!"

The young man wheeled, throwing his hands above his head and remarking coolly, almost impudently:

"In another three minutes I'd have been rich for life. You have your nerve—butting in this way!"

It was that remark, almost as much as his ingenuity and near-success that caused him to be featured in the papers—at a time

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when they were filled with crime stories, too.

The policeman was a little excited at having made the capture and either thought or pretended to think that this safe-cracker might put up a fight. But the young man, caught, so to speak, red-handed, remained quiet enough. In fact, a little too quiet in the policeman's opinion, for he refused to answer questions.

The wagon was called and whisked him away.

"What's your name?" said the night captain of police severely, eying him in that intense, accusatory way policemen have.

"That's for you to find out," said the young man; and not another word could be got out of him.

The robbery—though nothing was stolen—created some newspaper comment, largely because the papers quickly called the silent safe-cracker a "mystery." His silence was not the most surprizing thing about the case—at least not to Friedlander, who received a money-order, made out by John Doe, that fully covered the cost of repair to the window, safe, door-lock and mirror, to everything even remotely damaged; and with the reimbursement came an unsigned apology and some very pertinent and competent suggestions as to how the store could be better guarded in the future. The only thing asked in return for this unusual favor was that nothing be said of the reimbursement.

In the meantime, though a crime wave was breaking over the city, the papers had devoted much space to the young man. The police had declared themselves convinced that most, if not all, of the many robberies and of the numerous other crimes that had of late been troubling them were due to this man, of whom—they admitted—they had not the faintest record.

Commissioner Burgess himself showed a great interest and, after being closeted for some time with the young fellow, said to the reporters that he was convinced that this man was one of the cleverest that ever cracked a safe. He mentioned the fact that this crook had been able to attain such proficiency without ever being mugged.

No matter what was given out for publication, the conversation in part between the two was this:

"How do you feel?" asked the commissioner.

"All right," said the boy. "—— little to eat, though."

"You did a fair job, but if any real yegg took a squint at that safe he'd know you were an amateur. Rank. But, considering the practise you had, it was fair. Fair."

"Nothing missing, was there?"

"No—for a wonder. Usually the first people on the scene help themselves to what the thief has left lying around. Boy," said the stout, puffy commissioner, "you'd be astonished at how close to the surface the instincts of the crook are in most people. Didn't you even want to grab a handful—and run?"

"Yes, for a minute."

"Old Friedlander sent the department a check for five hundred dollars. That's not the amount John Doe sent him, either. He's tickled at the advertising and not having to lose any stones to pay for it. Of course, the patrolman that stepped in on you gets that check. He was tipped off when he called in at 1:16 to go around there. Oh, well, it's all in the game. How about lawyers?"

"Just as you told me to expect—there've been swarms after me. But I think the fellows you expected to take an interest must be on to the fact that I am an amateur. Maybe they got a squint at the safe. Does any such creature as you are after exist, anyway?"

"You know," said the commissioner, biting hard at the end of a fresh cigar, "who got you into this. And, if you think the men down at Washington are chasing fantoms, you have to admit that there are some pretty big men smoking the same pipe as the rest of us. I know we are not after a fantom. I see evidence of it every morning on the blotter. Look at the thing the papers call the 'crime wave.' By ——, it is a crime wave! Different from all others, too. This alleged fantom goes right into the courts and pulls the crooks out. He's thrown more monkey-wrenches into the wheels of justice than any man on earth. And, if we tamper with one of his fellows—well, I got Grimshaw in a cell here and coaxed him to tell a thing or too. Nothing of importance, for he didn't know anything. But the next morning Grimshaw was dead—in his cell—and on my desk was a letter saying: 'The only way you and your courts can ever punish my men is to get them to talk about me—and then we'll dispense with legal procedure, as in the case of Grimshaw.' That's the sort of thing that

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is making me lose weight. And the fellows down at Washington—they're worried, too. You'll hear from this fellow—or his lawyers."

"All the lawyers that have come to me are pikers. I say I have no money, no friends, nothing—and they say they are sorry. But after all the case against me does look bad; so perhaps they couldn't help much, anyway."

"Be patient. You'll hear from the office of Waller, Waller & Ishman yet. Even they have to eat out of his hand."

"Just who is this fellow you call 'he' all the time?"

"Sweet Judas! If I had a suspicion, I wouldn't be the accomplice of a safe-cracker. The army and navy, if necessary, would be called out to investigate him. Whoever he is, he's the biggest thing in this country right now. You know how they feel about him at Washington."

"Yes," said the young man thoughtfully.

When the commissioner had finished his "examination," the prisoner was returned to his cell, where his reflections were something after this manner:

"I don't know why people are crooks—when sooner or later they are thrown into a cage like rats. Oh, well," he said jokingly to himself, "if I don't get in touch with that mythical 'he,' as they call him, I'll turn State's evidence and show how the commissioner trained me in 'soup' and 'come-alongs'—or whatever it was I used—and gave me the dope on the movements of that private watchman and how to get into Friedlander's. That ought to stir up a real sensation."

Then with something of bitterness, of contempt for the processes of justice, he added:

"The Secret Service can't interfere with burglars, with wholesale assassins, with mysterious persons who plan a carnival of crime and such—must confine its attention to counterfeiters and people that re-use canceled postage stamps!"

In the course of a few days came the time when a turnkey unlocked his door, saying gruffly:

"Party to see you."

"Who?"

"Lawyer. Out you come."

"Don't want him. Tell him——"

"Tell 'im yerself. Out you come."

THE young man, who was known to the commissioner and to a certain man at Washington as Gowan McFarland, was taken down the corridor to the hall where bars and a wire mesh divided the "reception" room, on the one side of which stood visitors and on the other side stood the imprisoned.

A little man of middle age, oily and smooth, with a sweet smile—cultivated—and the mildest of manner, awaited McFarland.

"You're a lawyer?"

"An excellent guess. Excellent," said the little man pleasantly.

"I have no money."

"I judged not. I judged not."

"Good judge you are. Why did you guess it?"

"Because you've been in here for ten days."

"You mean, if I gave you money, you could get me out?"

"Give me money? Oh, my dear sir, no! Your bail will be fixed at five thousand dollars and ——"

"I haven't as many pennies."

"My dear sir, please allow me to explain—to explain. I merely wish to notify you that I shall come tomorrow with an order for your release. The bail will be ——"

"I told you I had no money—no friends."

"Indeed, sir, you have. Friends, too, anxious to relieve you from this unjust imprisonment. You will be released tomorrow."

"No mistake?"

"No, no. We never make a mistake of that kind. My name is Wallace. Rutherford B. Wallace, with the firm of Waller, Waller & Ishman. I have been retained for your defense and —" he raised a protesting hand as McFarland started to say something—"all the fees have been arranged for."

So it was that McFarland came to walk out of jail with his attorney. He was bailed out under a name which is of no importance; and, though it was not the easiest matter in the world to get the court to admit him to bail, it was nevertheless arranged.

And, as McFarland walked away with the attorney, Wallace said:

"Of course you can put implicit confidence in me—your attorney. And have you really no idea as to the party that came to your assistance? The party—er—that arranged for my services."

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"Not the slightest. I think you've likely as not made a mistake, and that 'the party' as you call him had somebody else in mind."

"Oh," said Mr. Wallace, with the air of one who knows when he has been lied to, but who is determined not to show resentment.

As a matter of fact, Mr. Wallace did not know whether McFarland spoke the truth or not. Mr. Wallace would very much have liked to learn the identity of the mysterious person who frequently employed the services of Waller, Waller & Ishman. The heads of the firm had even more curiosity in that direction than Wallace.

Waller, Waller & Ishman spoke of themselves as "friends of the underdog." The district attorney spoke of them as shysters.

They had large offices, and those offices were crowded from morning until evening. They had two score of agents and petty lawyers on their staff. Their clients were not only of the underworld, but also of the sporting world.

Did one want a divorce? Agree with Waller, Waller & Ishman as to the fee, and it would be forthcoming. Divorces were not easy to get, either. Did one commit murder? The firm of Waller, Waller & Ishman could produce as many alienists to swear to insanity as the district attorney could find to swear otherwise. Did one want anything? Waller, Waller & Ishman were most accommodating.

They could wrest dispensation from justice for almost any crime, or at least they could secure mitigation. They were the fathers confessor to the evil and criminal, and their lips were as tightly sealed as if they pronounced "*absolvo te*," instead of presenting a bill.

But of late months they had been singularly mystified and baffled. A good deal of downright worry had settled upon them. They were always at war with the district attorney, but now a new factor had come into their business, and they were in a way more afraid of it, or him, or whoever it was, than of that inveterate enemy, the district attorney. There was somebody, somewhere, whose money they pocketed but who neither granted them confidence nor encountered them personally.

They had, in their private court room, drilled witnesses to letter-perfectness in cases where he was interested; but they never knew who paid them. They had bribed and bluffed and artfully shot flaws into the criminal procedure of cases for him—and they had questioned those whom they aided for his sake. But they learned nothing.

Yet some of those whom they questioned must not have been so ignorant as they seemed, for Waller, Waller & Ishman had been served with a notice that made even them tremble to the depths of their polished boots. In effect they had been told: attend to your legal business and let my personal affairs alone, or you may find yourself in the prisoners' dock and some witnesses whom it would be unpleasant to face, on the stand.

Waller, Waller & Ishman had talked the matter over and decided to take no more of the unknown's cases. But the unknown told them they declined at their own risk. As ever, he continued to send gold and typewritten instructions. They were helpless. They suddenly realized that they had committed so many perjuries and so much bribery for him that he might make good his threats.

The impenetrable mystery that shielded him terrified them. It was a unique sensation and extremely unpleasant for the burly Waller brothers and the gaunt, deep-minded Ishman to feel helpless. There was no artifice of the frame-up unknown to them; but against whom should they direct their frame-up? That was what made them afraid. Their agents searched, but the search was called off when the elder Waller was taken three times to the morgue to identify as many of his agents.

Waller, Waller & Ishman had made up their minds to be "good" and content themselves with the golden harvest; but they could keep their eyes open and not overlook any opportunities. However, they were very reticent and circumspect in questioning any of the people whom the unknown sent them to rescue from fingers of the law.

Mr. Wallace conducted McFarland around the block to the offices of the firm and introduced him to Mr. Ishman. Ishman was tall, thin and dark; he was known to the initiated as the "brains" of the firm.

He shook hands with McFarland and ignored Wallace, who backed out of the private office as if it were to be expected that the great Ishman could waste no time in formality with him.

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Nor did Ishman waste words with McFarland.

"Here," he said, drawing an envelope from a pigeon-hole, "is a note for you."

In 27, Hotel Ardmore, you will find trunk, money and ticket. Use them.

And that was all.

"What does this mean?" asked McFarland, putting the note before the hungry, deep-set eyes of Ishman.

Ishman read it at a glance, though he stared at it for some time. He was thinking not of its contents but of possibilities. If one kept this fellow in sight, one must eventually see him meet people; and, no doubt, one of those people would be the Unknown. And, if the firm could possibly get on the track of the Unknown, there would be a target for a frame-up; and he might at least be forced to treat Waller, Waller & Ishman as equals. All they knew of him was that he was a man —they took it for granted that the Unknown was a man—and seemingly of inexhaustible wealth.

"I know nothing of it," said Ishman. "But I suggest that you follow instructions. Good-by."

McFarland was scarcely out of the door when Ishman called up a private detective agency that the firm sometimes employed when not wishing to use its own perhaps too well-known agents.

McFarland went to the Ardmore. He found the trunk, purse and ticket. He examined the trunk. It was filled with clothing. The purse contained one thousand dollars. The ticket, with reservation, was for Washington, D. C.

He took an evening train, due to arrive near midnight.

After him went a man in a brown suit. A rather short man he was, carrying what appeared to be a sample case. A shrewd, snappy, watchful sort of a man.

McFarland boarded the train and, despite the excitement, dozed off.

When the train arrived and McFarland stepped off, a man brushed by him—not the little man in brown suit with the sample-case. If any one had watched, he would have failed to see any such man leave the train—at Washington. McFarland caught only a blurred glimpse of the fellow who brushed by, but he felt the envelope slipped into his hand.

He read it and found instructions to go to a very well-known hotel, where rooms were engaged; the next day he was to call at the Crouch Apartments for one Felise Dobell. She would expect him for luncheon.

McFarland went to the hotel. He was shown to the rooms. After some indecision as to whether to telephone or to write to a certain party of importance, notifying him of his return to Washington, he decided to write. He called a messenger and gave the note to him with a stern injunction not to give it to any one but the party to whom it was addressed.

The messenger started on his way. He was knocked down by a machine and taken to the emergency hospital unconscious. But, when he recovered, he found the letter still in his pocket and hastened to deliver it.

However, the next morning Gowan McFarland was found in his bed—the throat cut from ear to ear.

A microscopic examination disclosed that the letter had been opened.

Also, on the same morning the body of a small man in a brown suit was found by the railroad tracks some fifteen miles out of Washington. He had not fallen from the train. He had been thrown from it. His throat was cut. In his pocket was a card certifying that he was in the employ of a private detective agency in New York.

When Ishman was notified by the angered and sorrowful office of the agency manager, he listened patiently at the telephone, and then sympathized. But, when he had hung up the receiver, he raised a long thin arm toward the ceiling and with deep feeling exclaimed:

"I'm through! I'll be good!"

II

THERE was more than one reason for my very intense interest in Gowan McFarland's face; perhaps more than two had their influence. But either of those alone would have been sufficient to stir one less careful than I about taking matters into his own hands and forcing a reckoning. I prefer to give those reasons in my own way and to mention the more important and surprizing last.

Gowan McFarland was a friend of mine—more than a friend, since we had a grandfather in common. A fine old gentleman he had been in his day—a gentleman in

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whom the boy McFarland, bearing his full name, had seen much to be proud of. If family chronicles are to be trusted, I perhaps have that same grandfather to thank for certain characteristics more or less advantageous to me. According to tradition he was a man whom none had seen excited, even agitated, though his had been anything but a quiet and uneventful life. It was said that he was an excellent marksman—seemingly instinctive in his accuracy—and a duelist of elevated gallantry.

I have a share of his unemotional character; and, supplementing a natural gift with practise, I became when scarcely more than a child an unusual marksman. On occasions I have been forced to an exchange of shots with certain people—and newspapers make a practise of referring to such things as "desperate duels." But I can not claim so much as a tincture of the gallantry that so distinguished the elder McFarland and was one of the endearing characteristics of his grandson, Gowan.

The elder McFarland's love of cards had come down to me intensified a thousandfold; and I appreciated fast horses, too. But in my day the law raised its forbidding hand against both, and it was no longer the part of a gentleman to be interested in them. More: it was no longer permitted to respectable people to have anything to do with gambling; and my family, as a family, is above all things "respectable." Emphatically so. That is why most of my relatives regard my attachment to the family tree as one of the regrettable accidents of birth.

The elder McFarland had an interest in pretty women that I was never able to claim as a part of my heritage, probably because I was never interesting to them, as he seems to have been.

But his loyalty to friends, his fealty to family blood, his readiness to sacrifice much or all to save or to avenge those who could call him friend or kinsman, was a characteristic that I have jealously cherished as an inheritance. I say, with what effort at modesty the statement permits, that I do not believe that I have ever turned my back on a friend, no matter to what low estate he may have come.

As for that, most of my friends are among those of low estate—the unfortunate, the suspected, the banned. I do not consider the well-fed acquaintances, more or less prominent in important circles, friends. Any one of them would discard me on the morrow if to retain the friendship brought them into any social or financial difficulties. Not so with the poor devils who more or less continually have the law at their coattails. They stick.

Mine is a family of very high pride in its honor—a clannish family, one that bands together; but it made an exception in its attitude toward me. Only the younger fellows of the McFarlands and Richmonds were sorry when I took the name of Donald Everhard the better to protect the sensibilities of the Richmonds, to whom notoriety—such as I seemed continually bringing on to myself—was detestable.

It happened that Gowan and I were intimate. Before entering upon the work that resulted in his death, he had told me all of what he was up to. But two other people were supposed to know. I had strongly advised against it. I had known why he prepared to pretend to be a burglar, why he went to jail, and all that. I had been told that he hoped to be released through the intervention of Waller, Waller & Ishman, who were believed to be the catspaw for the unknown person whose activity was causing far more alarm among the police and Federal officers than the newspapers—though they were quite agitated over the crime wave—suspected.

I disclosed my prejudice against the police by warning him to have nothing to do with them; but he was stubborn, cheerfully so. I knew Commisioner Burgess very well—knew him socially, so to speak. And I did not have a great deal of respect for his acumen. However, Burgess was really not acting on his own initiative but on suggestions from the Federal authorities.

Gowan was not a detective or Federal officer. He had been a young man who loved the open places and excitement. And, because he was almost totally unknown in the city, a very important person had persuaded him to undertake to insinuate himself into the confidence of the Unknown, who might possibly be in a position to recognize about all of the regular detectives and officials.

I deeply felt Gowan's death. The brutal manner of it might have been enough to stir up sinister emotions if there had not been something else which aroused me. For a wild moment I thought of offering myself as Gowan's successor. But I never had, and

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I never shall, willingly connive with the police, though I have on several occasions served their aims and ends. It never pleased me, when I had personal grievances to adjust, to hide behind the back of a policeman.

Among the minor influences that contributed to my resolution to do whatever could be done toward finding the person or persons, who seemed as elusive, as impalpable, as shadows in the night, was the fact that Gowan McFarland had been among the few of our numerous family that stood up for me, avowed a liking for me, sought my company. Not that I particularly care for the defense of my reputation—that being something I have never delegated to another—but I appreciated his loyalty. Moreover, he had been a devoted friend to Vivian.

It may seem strange that I should cherish in his favor the fact that he was devoted to my former wife. One must needs understand Vivian to understand my attitude toward her. As far as I was concerned, there was no other woman in the world and had never been any other. Vivian is a strange woman, emotional, whimsical, tempestuous, stubborn—and adorable. It was the third or fourth time she had left me, but the first that she had gotten a divorce. We always parted the best of friends and often met.

She would usually say—

"Don, you're one of the best men on earth, but no woman could live with you."

There was some truth in that, especially if the woman loved gaiety as she did. I am rather prosaic in my domestic habits, and I loathe parties, dancing, dinners and all that she called gaiety.

A good deal of Latin blood is in Vivian, and a great-great-grandmother was said to have come out of Russia—to have come out with a haste that gave rise to scandal, particularly as she left a husband, who was in some way related to the court, behind her. This great-great-grandmother was the pride of Vivian's life. She often compared her regard for the grandmother to my ancestral affection for the elder McFarland.

As Vivian had independent means, very independent indeed, she was not leashed to the purse-strings of any man. And it is my opinion that, if all wives had fortunes of their own, there would be few husbands who did not, for a time at least, experience widowerhood. From the time I first met her, I let Vivian do as she pleased. She often accused me of having spoiled her by such laxity; but on the other hand she was always frank, never resorted to subterfuge, very naively told the truth and remained as delightful as the first day I met her.

EVERY time she had left me, I tried to keep an eye on her—not a spying eye but a watchful one. She was given to getting into trouble. She was easily taken in by imposters and designing persons, and she would wilfully do the most incomprehensible things. Her heart was tender. Men were crazy over her—and her fortune. I am as cold-blooded, as unsympathetic, as she was otherwise.

An illustration may not be out of place: a man, after crowding his desperate attentions on her, threatened to kill himself on her doorstep. I knew she was fearful and anxious; so I called on the suicidal gentleman, introduced myself as a "relative" of the lady and assured him that, if he came within speaking distance of her again, he would not have to go to the trouble of committing suicide.

Vivian told me about it afterward, but she never did know why that temperamental wooer so abruptly terminated his unwelcome attention or why he who had threatened "suicide" should in sudden anxiety for his health go abroad.

I cared for Vivian too much to hate her—as married people usually do when they separate—for growing periodically tired of me, and I understood her too well to blame her. We had the unique distinction of having separated two or three times without a quarrel, and of having been divorced without an argument. I had gone to the train with her the morning she left for the West to get her divorce.

She obtained it on the very justifiable plea that I had not contributed to her support for two years—as if the poor devil of a gambler could venture to contribute to the support of one whose income was handed out in six large figures a month. The judge out West, where she established a legal residence, did not know that—unless he shared in a month's or so income and did not care. When she came back she asked me to come to see her.

"Don, I'm lonesome already," she said. "Don't think I am coming back to you. I never will! You're a brute. Now aren't

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you? You go gamble all night and leave me to amuse myself with tiddlediwinks or a dull book. But, Don, if I ever hear of your marrying again, I'll make trouble. I will. You know I will. You've no business to marry." And, as a quick, justifying afterthought, "It isn't fair to a woman, for you to marry her. I don't want to see any of my sisters throwing her life away on you. I'll scratch her eyes out if she tries it!"

Strange people, women. Some of the time they seem to move and have their being in a sort of fourth-dimensional psychology into which man can no more penetrate than he can push across into the invisible and understand it. And Vivian was a strange woman—that is, strange even for a woman.

She possessed that quality which seems to madden men, that makes them forget life's values, forswear their honor and throw all, everything, away for one touch of her delicate fingers, one approving gleam of her eyes—dark eyes, the least bit suggestive of the Far East or Tatar plains.

It might be well to try as best I can without the artist's crayon to put her picture on to paper; though after all it was personality, the inner shape, force, spirit and serpent wisdom of her that made Vivian not as other women. Many have been slender to the point that almost reaches but does not suggest thinness and no taller than she who must tiptoe to press her red, firm lips against the mouth of a man normal in height. Her face had a nearly tragic cast; it was richly tinted with the dark blood of some Southern or Eastern race, a face sepia in coloring, and lacked in fullness as have the faces of all distinguished tragédiennes. Her features had been molded with delicacy, also with firmness. Her cheeks were slightly shadowed through the irregular contour that made the cheek-bones noticeable.

Her lips were sensitive, quick to laughter, to pouts, rapid in anger—but they never trembled unless the emotion was great. The nose was thin and straight. The hair and eyes were physical wonders of her: eyes that were wide and innocent as a child's, or narrow and gleaming, tense, as if the fiery, passionate soul of her were focused there.

Dark eyes they were, not solidly black but with large pupils and irises tawny as burned gold. The lashes were black and long, very long and curved: they never tangled unless with tears. And what is called the "crowning glory" was in her case literally so, for her hair was ebony, glitteringly black, heavy in mass and fine of fiber.

She was beautiful in that nearly bizarre way that the women who fascinate and madden men are always beautiful. She knew of her beauty, too; and, more than one of refined taste gives thought to the proper framing of a fine portrait, she was ever studiously calculating the trappings, the clothes, the framing of herself.

I loved her. I could not help it. But he who sits long at the table of green cloth has learned but little if he permits his emotions to break out, his jealousy to flare. Besides, I am by temperament almost incapable of becoming agitated. Moreover, my philosophy of life—if I may call my simple ideas by such a learned word as "philosophy"—would permit every man and woman to live his own life and her own life as each wishes up to that point where he or she does not actually harm another.

That was why I let Vivian do as she pleased; and what hurt she gave me was no honorable reason for wishing to restrain—to hurt—her that I might ease my own selfishness. I loved her because she was as she was, and I had no wish to see her transformed into a sober, mechanically devoted domestic.

Vivian had disappeared. She left no word, no trace. She simply went out of the house one day and did not return. Her maid, after waiting twenty hours past the time when she thought Vivian should at the latest have returned, appealed to me. I knew that Vivian was reckless—also that she was capable. She had done many unaccountable things out of sheer whim, but it was not like her to make voluntarily a "mysterious" disappearance.

Though she was superficially frivolous, she had within her much that did not appear on the surface. Perhaps only I, of all who knew her, realized what depths of real, fine womanhood her whimsies and restlessness concealed. For her to disappear willingly was, I believed, the last thing possible. She had nothing to fear from me. I never opposed her, never intruded upon her.

I did all that could be done to locate her. I, who had scorned detectives, poured money by the two handsful into various agencies. As usual, they bled me with false encouragement and lied about clues.

All that had happend some time before

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Gowan was murdered. Had I been easier of mind, I probably would have taken from the first something of a personal interest in his work; but I was anxious and baffled over Vivian. She had left less of a trace than a pebble that is dropped into a wind-riffled pool. Everything I could think of, I did—even to going to Antoine Gaboreau, of whom I shall have occasion to speak again.

That villainous old cripple with the spider-brain had long nursed a curious enmity toward me, or a more curious friendship—I was never quite sure which. But I was sure when I left that he knew nothing of Vivian. And I was completely lost, at sea—for one of the few times in my life, helpless.

Then Gowan McFarland was murdered in a room of a famous Washington hotel. He was murdered after he had written a letter, giving in ill-advised and exhaustive detail all of his movements and suspicions—the latter being valueless—to a man of extreme importance in the capital. But he had made no mention of receiving a note that was found in his pocket the next morning—a note which ran:

For my sake and Don's be careful! Do anything they tell you to—don't hesitate—no matter how terrible! You have no idea how closely you are watched. Tear this up and burn it and throw the ashes away.

It was in Vivian's handwriting.

III

OF COURSE, it was not until some days later that I learned of the note or the contents of the letter which Gowan had written on the night of his death. There was no information in it that gave the least clue to his murderers—else they would never have permitted the letter to be delivered.

I also felt sure that they did not know of the note, since he had not mentioned it in the letter and it was found on his person, from which they would probably have removed it if for nothing more than to confront Vivian. I was very apprehensive, though, lest her indiscretion had been perceived. Those to whom she warningly referred were dangerous and cruel.

My relationship, or rather friendship, with Gowan was well-known by those who had induced him to take the fatal rôle; and it was rightfully suspected that the Don of the mysterious note referred to me.

I spent an uncomfortale two hours with the man who came from Washington to see me. Mr. Brown was linx-eyed and watchful, but my training at the control of voice, face and manner had been made at the tables of green cloth. Before all things else, I am a gambler, a card gambler; and, as the occasion seemed to warrant, I lied as steadily as if merely deceiving some inquisitive busybody, though I hate to lie at any time to anybody.

How Gowan came to be in possession of that note puzzled the astute Federal agent. There had been, as I have said, no mention of the note in the lengthy letter Gowan had written, detailing almost every move. When had he received it? Who could have written it? How did I imagine my name to come to be in it?

I opposed a polite denial to each question. I knew nothing. I said so.

I suggested that there was no real reason for supposing that the Don of the note referred to me. I assured him that the world was full of Donalds. I mentioned that perhaps Gowan had found the note—picked it up—that it really had no bearing on him, being merely something that somebody else had lost. Why had he not mentioned it in the letter since he mentioned so many other confidential things? Why had he neglected to destroy it if it had been intended for him?

"But it looks peculiar—your name and all that," Mr. Brown persisted.

"All what?"

"Simply this—" he hesitated whether to call me Richmond or Everhard.

"Simply what?"

"The note obviously refers to what the gang—whose ever it is—might want McFarland to do. And she—you can see it is a woman's hand—warns him not to hesitate. For her sake and Don's? Why would she appeal to him 'for her sake' unless she was well-known to him? He was very well-acquainted with Mrs. Ever—I mean Mrs. Richmond, wasn't he? And your name is Don—and McFarland was a close friend of yours. 'For my sake and Don's.' See what I am driving at, Mr. — er — Richmond?"

"Do you mean to suggest that I know something I am keeping from you?" I asked.

"I insist that it looks funny," he said stubbornly. "And this note is the only thing we have to work on."

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"What of Felise Dobell at the Crouch Apartments?"

"She disappeared the same night McFarland was murdered. Nobody knows where she has gone—vanished."

"Is it possible in this country and at this day that a crook can empty the jails, retain lawyers, hoodwink courts, commit murders, apparently maintain a large organization and move agents about without leaving a trace that either the Secret Service or the police can follow?"

"We can do nothing," he said simply.

"You think the only way to get in touch with this unknown is to commit a crime and go to jail? Commit such a big crime that the unknown will interest himself in the case, get the crook out and take him into the gang?"

"It seems so."

"I suppose you would give a man special dispensation for committing crime if it would be the means of catching this party?" I asked.

"Now, if you would—" he began with a touch of eagerness.

"But I won't. I merely asked what the legal attitude would be."

"Well, we would prefer that a man only appear to commit crimes and get into this fellow's confidence. This man or gang of men seems to want only clever crooks—and they are scarce. Very scarce."

"Clever crooks?" I inquired. "Then why does he take every Tom, Dick and Harry out of jail? Their being in jail would seem to me to indicate they were not so clever—not so clever as the police, for instance, who put them there."

"I really never thought of that," he said modestly.

Mr. Brown did not pose. He was no simpleton. I very much wished myself through with him. If I seem to have had the best of the conversation, it must be remembered that I am the chronicler and would at least unconsciously take care not do myself an injustice. His very simplicity and steadiness made me uncomfortable. I do not like to run counter to Federal agents: they are not like the police, being quiet-voiced men with simple manners.

"Now that you have thought of it," I went on, "doesn't it appear very strange?"

"In a way, yes. But I said that clever crooks were scarce—exceedingly scarce. You have no suggestions to offer?"

"No."

"I don't like to speak of this, but you know—that is, it couldn't be—I mean that note couldn't possibly have been written by—by Mrs. Richmond?"

I watched him closely for some seconds before I answered with a question—

"Why?"

"I understand that she disappeared——"

"You mean when she got her divorce?"

"No. Afterward—just dropped from sight. I have heard. I wondered—I knew, Mr. Richmond—that is, I have learned that you and she continued to be the best of friends. And I wondered if you could explain her disappearance. There is believed to be something mysterious about it, isn't there?"

I laughed slightly, laughed as a man does who flings his last chip into the pot to bluff, to win the pot without having to show a worthless hand; and I said patiently:

"The ways of detectives are strange, indeed. We were and are good friends. Met frequently, as you probably know. I made a wager with her that the private detectives of this country were useless. She went on a visit to her sister in San Francisco—left as you or I would leave, excepting that she told no one and used another name in buying her ticket. And I turned every detective agency in the city loose on her trail. Some of them have reported her in London, some have heard she went to Rio Janeiro and almost every place else on the globe but San Francisco.

"One agency did get as close as Los Angeles, but he had her doubling back to Salt Lake. As a matter of fact, she is now, I believe, on a yachting party in the South Seas. That is all there is to her disappearance. A rather expensive game, I admit, but one that she insisted on playing. McFarland knew, and I. But I don't believe there were any others in the secret."

I fancy that it was the way I said it as much as, if not more than, the words. At any rate, I could see that he did not doubt me enough to cross-examine the story. It was very well-known by those who knew anything about Vivian that she was wealthy and in a position to play as expensive a game as she pleased.

"So you see," I went on, "what kind of errors obvious deductions are likely to lead into. You hear my former wife has disappeared. You find a note on a murdered

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man with a name in it and at once jump to the conclusion that she wrote the note and that the name is mine. That in some way she is connected with the mysterious organizer of crime—and you seem to think that I am, too."

"Not at all," he said with more politeness than sincerity.

"You will, I trust, pardon me," I continued, "if I say that I begin to understand why this mysterious Unknown has been able to keep his tacks concealed."

I did not intend that the sarcasm should be lost on him, and it was not. He flushed indignantly. But he did not lose his temper as I had rather hoped he would. I thought perhaps he would then let me know just how suspicious he might be that I had not told him the truth. He was unruffled when he left me, and I know that he did more or less believe me.

If he had told me that the Federal authorities were on a definite trail after the mysterious Unknown, I would readily have broken my prejudices and contributed my services. But they and the police were apparently no less baffled than I; and I believed myself as able to ferret out information as either—now that there was even only the merest shadow of something definite to work on.

Besides, there would have been much needless danger in linking one's self to the Federal authorities or to the police. Though only two persons beside myself had known of Gowan's part, I could scarcely have hoped for any such secrecy. I was too well-known generally. Newspapers had often spoken of me, and anything I did out of the ordinary might have attracted attention. Certainly the reporters would have felt they had a story worth printing if they could have discovered that Donald Everhard had joined the police. And Secret Service is only the name for another kind of police.

I intended to do what I could and to do it as usual—alone.

IV

NOT far from the water-front and in the basement of a building where humans are housed like rabbits in a neglected hutch—being given a night's lodging for ten cents on hard plank beds and under vermin-infested covers—there is a resort that for something over fifty years has had an increasingly infamous reputation. It was originally, I believe, a kind of subterranean warehouse; but, so long ago that the date has become mythical, it was changed into a saloon.

At first it had a certain importance in politics, but it gradually sank into what mission workers call a "low groggery," being a dark and dismal dive, lighted even on the brightest days by spluttering jets that do not succeed in beating back the encroaching shadows. It is called by some people the "Devil's Hatchery"—perhaps an appropriate name. Of what name it may have officially, I am not aware. The police refer to it simply as the "Hole."

I understand that from the day the first glass of rum was sold there its doors have not been closed. Despite laws and orders the police have seen fit to let the Hole remain open, though any roundsman with a wave of his hand could have closed its heavy grease-coated doors and shut out in the night the wrecks and wastrels that drifted down the worn steps to lounge at the grimy tables—tables smeared with the drippings and splashing of years — tables polished and blackened by the ragged elbows of the unending pilgrims who loitered awhile on the way to hell.

It was neither reasons of sentiment nor of graft, as I understand, that caused the police to show consideration for this obscure and miserable dive. They found it a convenience. For one thing, when a crime stirred public opinion, they could always lay their hands on some one with a notorious record and be pretty sure of securing a conviction. When Justice demands a victim, any goat will do. As in the sacrifice to certain heathen gods, the important thing is to have blood spilled on the altar.

But the Hole was an even more important convenience to the police in another way. I make no concealment of my prejudice against the police—but it is the system rather than the men themselves that incurs my prejudice. I know intimately some of the people who have much more authority than they should be allowed to have in police affairs; and the marvel is not that they catch so few criminals but that they catch any.

And to have closed the doors of the Hole would have been to scatter and disperse the waifs and strays who came nightly like a

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rabble rout risen from some Potter's Field for the *danse macabre* and whose hoarse throats and clacking tongues, like Rumor herself, chattered the gossip and news of the underworld.

The Hole was the haunt of the lowest and vilest—the broken crooks, the tramps, the panhandlers, the sneak-thieves at odds with fortune, the hags and burned-out women of the street—all who were on the down grade straggled into its capacious dimness from early afternoon clear around the clock and through small morning hours.

Men who in their heyday had been known as the boldest of the bold, quick-witted and successful, now came shuffling furtively to doze the night through over a glass of red whisky, spending ten cents at the low-built oaken bar. Women who in their day had ranged the cities of the world, now stripped of finery, in draggled skirts and soleless shoes, huddled in backless chairs and gossiped. Whatever went on in the crime world was known and talked of in the Hole. All were veterans of crime and worn travelers along its dark ways.

And, as if these initiates had developed some psychic perception that enabled them to learn every drab secret, to hear even the slightest of whispered rumors, they would discuss at dark the full enlightening details of some crime that had baffled the police at dawn.

Not that these wrecks whom Death seemed to have overlooked always knew or were always right, but they were never without an opinion, never without fragments of fact and were usually not far in their guesses and gossip from the truth.

The police often went into the Hole for clues and were often sardonically set in hue and cry on the wrong track, for not even in this filthy anteroom to the Dark Chamber did the poor wretches cease to remember their inexorable ethics that made the disloyal, the "snitch," an outcast among even the utterly damned.

But there are weak spirits who would rather snitch than be railroaded on a trumped-up charge; and the police heard enough, and found enough of that to be true, to keep a protective arm about this sanctuary of decrepit vice. Palatial gambling clubs that paid fees great enough to ransom kings were raided with ax-blows on their carved doors; the saloons that were really political headquarters of powerful officials had front and back doors locked out of deference to Sunday; the bacchanal houses, supported by young bloods whose fathers and uncles had names of nation-wide influence, were invaded, and the female inmates hauled off to jail; but the Hole was left alone.

It was outside the route of slumming parties. Mission workers might stumble on to it and raise lamentatious voices to the press, which in turn would send photographers and women reporters to gather material for the harrowing of Sunday readers. But the Hole survived it all—though, if the storm became severe, the bar might be ostentatiously abandoned and its low, broad top be converted into beds so that the mission workers could in their annual reports to patrons relate glowingly how they had changed a vile dive into a "shelter."

I do not wish to give the impression that the Hole was the haunt of the innocuous unregenerate only. It was, as I have said, also known as the Hatchery—a place where the devil's spawn was hatched. The police frowned angrily on this industry, and the tutoring of the less experienced by the nerveless veterans—too broken to ply their "art"—was carried on with a secrecy that even permitted a denial of the fact.

It must be remembered that outside of the prisons and reformatories, where for obvious reasons the more proficient instructors are handicapped, there are no recognized academies of crime. The State does very well by the underworld in providing at the expense of respectable citizens such institutions for instruction where the various specialists may discuss methods and have plenty of leisure for developing new ideas. But, owing to certain ineradicable prejudices among the criminally inclined, these do not all avail themselves of the opportunity of prison education and so persistently seek their degrees elsewhere.

MOST people seldom realize that crooks work hard and long for skill in their chosen grafts; they do not merely decide to become criminals and at once begin the police-baffling stunts we hear much about or yield to temptation and right off become shoplifters, pick-pockets, safe-crackers, short-changers—subtlest of crooks—or any of those things requiring a sharpened brain and cunning hand.

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As a usual thing they study, practise and work with a patience and industry which, if applied to legitimate pursuits, would bring them some of the rewards that may be had legally; and it is quite common for the ambitious gangster, anxious to rise in the underworld, to seek out the broken-down masters and with some gratuities get their advice and instruction.

Many of these younger gangsters made a practice of visiting the Hole to hear not only the current gossip but to listen to the crime epics of other days; and usually they were students under the control of some clever criminal who had retired as far as possible from the ranging eyes of the police.

The Hole was not an easy place for the uninitiated to find. It was approached through a tenement alley almost bridged with fire-escapes and festooned with bedding and laundry. The alley was dim in daylight, dismal at dark. The entrance was subterranean and reached by going down a dozen steps that led to the heavy doors. There were other entrances, but none from the street. Other entrances—a stair from above and a dark unlit passageway that was said to lead underneath the street into a "fence's" basement on the other side.

As I have said, the Hole was originally a sort of a storage basement. Sugar and coffee importers, together with certain shipping offices, had occupied the building above, which had become a "flop" house and tenement. In the days when this one was erected, buildings had been so constructed that they not only were solid but looked it—instead of being slender concrete pillars that a puff of wind seemingly would topple. In the basement the oaken rafters, barely above a tall man's head, blackened and grimed, showed not the least decay. Thick pillars at intervals cast dense shadows across the floor when they chanced to be near any one of the three or four flaring gas-jets, two of which, as if to better advertise its presence, were above the low, broad bar. No mirror was behind that bar—only a heavy cupboard holding bottles and glasses and some packages of tobacco.

As I came in, there was a general turning of heads and a suspicious lowering of voices among the score or more men and women huddled about the tables. I was not only a stranger, but by the cut of my clothes—I am particular about clothes—not one of their class. Whether I was a "shadow," as the old-timers called detectives, a mission worker, a newspaper man or just an ordinary fool who had come stumbling curiously into their midst, was a matter of doubt.

The bartender, without apron or coat, though the air was a bit cool, and with greasy suspenders holding his dirty, stained trousers, was a villainous old fellow with a predatory nose and protruding, tobacco-colored teeth.

"What's yer pleasure, sir?" he asked in a difficult effort at politeness, no doubt hoping to give me a drugged drink or at least to make an exorbitant charge for thinly disguised poison.

I never drink.

"I want to see Joe Connolly," I said.

The man looked at me sharply and, scratching his touseled hair, asked doubtfully—

"Who's he?"

Listeners were drawing close. Sharp eyes were scrutinizing my face. I could feel them. I had asked for one who in his day had been a distinguished crook. Prison had broken him, but he still might be a desirable victim for the police. His friends were wary in putting a stranger on Connolly's track. And I was a stranger—at least in person.

When the bartender asked, "Who's he?" I said that Connolly was a friend of mine and added—

"You have this taken to him, and I think that he'll come."

I took out a card-case and, selecting a blank, penciled a few words on it and laid it on the bar.

The group pressed closer. There was a stretching of necks to read. The bartender took up the card and studied it carefully. Evidently my handwriting rather troubled his modest learning. I had written simply:

"I would like to see you. D. E."

"Who might you be?" shrilled an old crone assertively, as if well aware that she was asking aloud the silent question in everybody's head.

"A friend of his."

"Maybe youse is, an' maybe youse ain't," a hoarse voice muttered behind me.

"Shh-h," said a cracked, sardonic female voice. "Can't youse tell a gent'man when youse sees 'im?"

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Her heavy irony brought a burst of amused cackles.

I said nothing.

"I'll tell yer," said the bartender. "I'll make some 'quiries about this feller, Con'ley —yer said Con'ley, didn't ye? An' what's his moniker—Joe? Joe Con'ley. I'll ask 'bout 'im, an' you c'n come back in a day or two."

Connolly in his prime had been the smoothest of "dips." He admitted, however, that his nerve was gone and with rather unique philosophy reconciled himself to the down-and-out class. He was careful to keep as near the blind side of the law as a man can who is reduced to the necessity of getting a living without the law's sanction.

I did not actually know, but I suspected that he maintained a pickpocket class for the instruction of the young. I do not pry into the business of my acquaintances, of my friends, unless I think it concerns my own affairs. But such a class, I thought, was about all that dope and booze and fifteen years behind cold stone walls had left him fitted for.

"I t'ink maybe I c'n fin' Joe," said a weasel-eyed youth.

He had a body, slim and limber and loosely hung as a frame of bamboo, a thin wolfish face and a mop of red hair that stuck unrulily from under his low-drawn cap.

At once an undertone of muttered curses and warnings came on to the lad's ears. He answered savagely that the "whole pack o' youse bums c'ld go ter ——." He had spirit, that boy. In fact, I thought he rather enjoyed having aroused the wily pack that snapped at him.

I plucked the card from the dirty fingers of the bartender and handed it to the boy with a half-dollar.

"I don't know as I c'n fin' 'im. I'll make a stab."

"Take your time," I said. "There is no hurry."

And, though I was impatient and did feel there was cause for hurrying, I walked across to a table and sat down. The table was nearest the bar. It had been occupied until the people about it had come close to inspect me and hear what I was saying.

"Hey, you guy. Youse in me chair," an old puffy villain shouted at me.

Whether I was in his chair or whether he was merely seeking a pretext for making entertainment, I had no way of telling. I said nothing. I scarcely moved, beyond turning slightly to look him over. I don't know how pugnacious his original intention may have been, but he was easily pacified and moved away, muttering, with backward glances over his shoulder.

I casually surveyed the faces turned on me, looking one by one into the smoldering, red, fierce or bleared and washed-out eyes. They were wondering if I came from the police. They realized that I was not a casual sight-seer; and, in view of the fact that I did not ask questions or poke about, they were pretty well assured that I was not a reporter or a mission worker.

THEN came down the stairs, with heavy feet and slow tread, two big men. Almost any one could at a glance have told that one was a detective. There is something that marks the plain-clothes dick the world over. Of course, some of the detectives are unrecognizable, but many of them could not hide their calling under a disguise a foot thick.

This fellow was one of the latter type. He talked as loudly and freely as if those about him were stone deaf, and he talked of them as a keeper might talk of animals. It was easy to see that he was much impressed by having as a companion the man at his side.

"This is the Hole—that's what we call it —the Hole. The worst in the city. Turrible dump. All these 're crooks what 'ave done time. That's Fanny Bird over there with the shawl on her head—good-looker in her day. Wouldn't think it, wouldju? Cleverest dip 'tween the coasts, too, she was. That's 'Cocky Jim'—second-story man. Shot his way out one night an' got life. 'Prieved after twenty years. Goin' a-be a good boy from now on, ain't yer, Jim?" the detective called at the crouched, shrinking wreck of a man that was huddled against a stanchion.

"That feller there is old Ben Bornum, alias Barnum—after the showman, yu'know. Great con man in his day. Swindled millyons, they say. An' him by the table——"

The detective stopped abruptly. His wandering eyes had lighted on me. He was wondering who I was and what I was doing there.

But his companion made some remark that momentarily distracted his attention.

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The man with the detective was large, well-built, solid, somewhere near fifty—that is, between fifty and sixty—with intellectual power and firmness showing in his massive face, a face where every feature stood clear and prominent and strong as granite boulders on a hillside. Everything about him was massive or had the suggestion of massiveness without, perhaps, really being so.

He wore a long, black, light-weight overcoat, a black felt hat, carried a black cane with a head of gold and walked calmly, without slowness or haste, or stood without restlessness, impassively surveying the bleak haunt of the broken men and women, famine-bitten, sin-eaten.

I wondered what thoughts leaped and raced behind that inscrutable forehead of Conrad Hearn as he gazed about. Conrad Hearn was called the "bankers' banker." His was a house that financed big corporations, controlled railroads and steamship companies, which had bought up immense coal and copper districts and exploited them. He was a man seldom seen, always heard of, but little or nothing of his private life was known.

It was almost incredible, even with my eyes to testify, that he was there. But I knew that it was he. I have the gambler's faculty for remembering faces, for identifying faces; and, though I had never met him, I had seen him once or twice and his pictures many times. A year or so before, if one might believe the papers, he had stood in danger of going to prison.

The Department of Justice had cast its nets upon him. He had been grilled by a Congressional committee and had made admissions that revealed audacious financial manipulations and an appalling hold upon the industrial and commercial forces of the country. One congressman had won seven days of fame by sarcastically demanding of Hearn if he were trying to make a "king" of himself.

After a hubbub of some months the matter gradually faded from the press. In a general way it was understood that Hearn was to rectify his financial interests to the extent of making them conform with what was permissible under the series of new legislation that Congress was prescribing.

It was said, however, that Hearn had been greatly angered and had sworn to the committee that, if the Federal authorities treated him as a criminal, he would, Samson-like, pull down his industries. That was a wild rumor that passed from mouth to mouth for a few days. Perhaps no one believed it, but somehow or other it fitted the popular estimation of Conrad Hearn's character. Anyway, it made interesting talk in clubs and coincided with alarming flurries in the stock-market.

It was impossible to tell what impression this scene made on him. It was even more impossible to conjecture what he was doing there. He looked about carefully, noting everything but showing nothing by face or manner. I doubt if any one else realized who he was. It was not likely that any of the habitues of the Hole had ever seen him before, and it was improbable that they would, even if his face had suggested the pictures occasionally in the papers, believe that he who was reputed to be among the world's richest men would come, practically alone, among them.

Little was known of Conrad Hearn personally. He had always avoided publicity, and, except during the time when people spoke excitedly of prison as a possibility—no one believed it a possibility, but the very idea gave a thrill—there had never been much about him as a person in the papers. His name had come to stand for an institution, a banking firm, rather than for a man.

In a slow, penetrating way, he turned his eyes upon me, and for some seconds we stared, each at the other. He spoke in a low tone to the detective. I could tell that he had spoken of me.

The detective took a few steps forward and said—

"What's your name?"

He spoke in that mandatory, officious way that so many police officers have and which irritates me more than I care to take time to describe.

I did not want to make a scene. I did not intend to make one. Neither did I intend that a plain-clothes man should bully me as he bullied the poor wastrels that shrank from his voice.

"You heard me, didn'tju? What's your name?"

"Yes, I heard you," I said with a softness calculated to rile him.

It did.

"Well, what is it? What ju doin' here, anyway?"

"What am I doing here? This is a public

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place, isn't it? And you can see what I am doing."

Of course that made him furious. Also, gleeful cackles and chuckles fell from various lips, and these were far from having a soothing influence on him.

Then came the inevitable retort of the policeman:

"Think you're smart, don't you? Don't get fresh with me, young feller. Guess I'll take you in. Come on with me." And, turning toward Conrad Hearn, he added with bombastic explanation, "Only way to deal with these fresh fellers."

"Come with you?" I repeated. "I don't know you—and I am suspicious of strangers."

The bartender snorted. Others burst into taunting laughter. I had no time to look into Conrad Hearn's face, but I fancied that the trace of a smile appeared on his lips. Anyway, I was to learn eventually that Hearn was not without humor.

The detective lost what judgment he had. He reached for my coat collar, and I struck up his arm with a short, hard blow that must have been painful.

He swore luridly and his hand slipped toward his hip.

"You resist an officer! I'll show you—you ——"

"Be careful!" I have an aversion to being sworn at, and I showed it in my warning.

"You—" he stopped, almost stuttering.

"How do I know you are an officer? You did not show a badge. I have no reason to be familiar with fly-cops, dicks and bulls."

"I'll take you in right now—call a wagon and——"

"If you are an officer, I suppose you can do that; but I shall certainly call Mr. Hearn as a witness that you——"

My mention of Mr. Hearn's name gave the detective a shock. The banker made a quick, decisive gesture, at once indicative of annoyance that he had been recognized and objecting to being called as a witness.

It was an embarrassing moment for the detective. He stood between the gleeful sneers of the dilapidated crew that attentively watched to see how he would dispose of my insolence and the objection of the banker to being implicated in any police proceedings. As usual, money power had the most influence.

"Well," said the detective with large magnanimity, "I'll let you off this time. But you want to be more civil after this. Get me?"

"I understand—yes."

The detective, anxious to be away, started for the entrance, but Conrad Hearn paused, turned and looked at me steadily. An odd expression was on his face. Yet it was not as if he were trying to fix me in his memory or as if rebuking me for having mentioned his name in such a place.

No one of those about seemed to have associated his name with *the* Hearn. No doubt he was a little puzzled as to how I had recognized him. The world is so ordered that those who seek publicity and get it are constantly chagrined to encounter people who never heard of them; and those elusive when publicity pursues seem to find themselves identified at every turn.

Hearn looked at me in a peculiar and indefinable way. I am not overly modest—people who depend largely on themselves for what they want seldom are—but it did not occur to me until afterward that there was something about his expression which seemed to convey the wish to know me personally, to know me well.

CONRAD HEARN followed the detective up the steps. The gallows-birds around about set up a croaking of harsh laughter and chattered loudly, saying something or other in high voices intended as a compliment for my ears. Truly, they made at every opportunity the most of the dismal mirth they yet could enjoy before they made their unreturning journey in a pine litter.

Joe Connolly, with the boy who had gone for him, hurried in. Connolly came up to me, and what suspicious doubts may have still lurked in the brains of any who had regarded me askance must have disappeared.

Connolly was Irish, but, as there are about as many types and castes of Irish as there are colors in a prism, that really is not of much descriptive value. He was rather tall and not heavily built, nor yet lanky. The contour of his face was uneven but not in any sense rugged. The casual observer would have noticed his forehead and eyes; the forehead being high and broad, the eyes sunk within overshadowing brows.

Bright brown eyes they were, rather small but alert. His jaw was loosely hung, and the flabbiness of his lips gave something

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of a denial to the forceful impression one could not help but get from the forehead. Connolly was very nervous. He always was. He showed it in his restlessness of body and the continual movement of his long delicate fingers and unconscious furtiveness. He was well-dressed, a bit flashily, perhaps, and had pieces of jewelry stuck all over him.

"Say, Mr. —" he caught my glance and hesitated—"Ellis, but I'm glad to see you! I come a runnin' just as soon as 'Snips' brought me your note."

He shook hands warmly and flopped into a chair.

Connolly had told me that I could always get in touch with him through inquiries at the Hole. But he had very nearly underestimated the solicitude of his friends for his safety. He was, or believed he was, indebted to me for some things that he considered favors. It was really the other way around; but always he showed an eagerness to do something that I might want.

For one thing, he did not actually know—but he had a suspicion—that I could tell very much more than I ever did tell about certain small sums of money that with a degree of regularity came to three or four mothers whose husbands had been unfortunate enough to be caught by the police.

He based his suspicion on the fact that a pension usually started for any needy mother along about the same time that he would tell me of the miserable fix she was in —these women with babes and loyalty to their convict husbands. Such "suspicions" as that touched Connolly's heart more than favors done directly to him.

Understand me, I am not trying to make him out as a decent fellow in any particular. He was a crook unregenerate. But in a somewhat intimate acquaintance with crooks and fellows of their kind I have never found any of them who were not very much like other people. They suffer, love, have regards, sympathy and passions the same as —as—well, as anybody.

That they have different codes of ethics has nothing whatever to do with their sensibilities. And, if I were called upon to name the locality where gratitude is most responsive, where personal loyalty is most unreserved, I should certainly mention last that caste of society that is termed "respectable."

One thing more I must stop to say: crooks are tribal and clannish. Within the tribe, or gang, they cultivate and display all of the personal attributes that raise men to the respect and admiration of their fellows everywhere. Their view-point, however, is narrow, restricted. They are loyal to a gang but not to society as a whole. Like savages, they regard strangers as enemies and those outside of their tribe as legitimate victims. That, and that only, is the essential difference between the lawless and the law-abiding.

"Say," remarked the wolfish youngster known as Snips, pushing the coin I had given him on to the table toward me. "I don't take nothin' offen Joe's frien's. I tought you wus a fake, maybe. Joe he says you is de goods. Didn'yu, Joe?"

"Your mother wants you or something. Peddle your papers. Me an' Mr.— Ellis wants to talk. Let's go back further—out o' the light. Old Anne over there, deaf as a door-knob, got eyes like X-rays. Lip-reader. Get you far as she can see. Give her a telescope an' she can hear the angels whisperin'."

So we moved into the cavernous darkness —cavernously dark and damp. From where we sat, we could look forward at the shapes, grotesque, silhouetted against the lights and hear the voices, high with curses or merriment more profane than curses. From some shabby pocket a mouth-organ was fetched and the music, weird with something of the artist's breath in it, brought two shambling dancers capering on to the uneven floor. High cheers and laughter served for encores.

"Snips," said Connolly. "Some musician, that lad. Writes poetry, too. Ought to hear it. —— good. Notice his fingers? Like copper wires—live 'uns. Hard little savage to manage. Have to bust his head ever' once in a while."

"Has a close mouth?" I asked.

"Close? No. Wide open, always. Talkin' same as eatin' with him. But turn anything loose? Not that kid. Wise head, but gabbles all the time. I like him, though. Straight."

"You hear pretty much everything that goes on, don't you, Connolly?"

"I try to. Tell you Mr. Ever—I mean Ellis. Notice I picked up a monniker to fit the initials? I don't do much but listen these days. I'm gettin' old. Quiet life for me."

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"Well, Connolly, I have heard some people talking about a mysterious person who seems trying to recruit a gang out of the jails. Said to be responsible for what the papers call a wave of crime. Heard anything about that party?"

"Some. They say he's got an eye on ever' gun in the burg."

"They? Who are they?"

"Ever'body."

"And he—who is he?"

"That's it. Who is he? If he is anybody."

"What do you think about it? Is there such a person—I mean do you think there is?"

"All I know is that a feller pulls something, see? Big, you know. An' the bulls cop him. Then he gets out. He's got money, too. Usual when a crook gets out, the lawyers got all the money. That's what a crook saves money for—to get lawyers to spring him. But they say this mystery guy gets 'em out."

"For a gang?" I asked.

"Maybe so. I know some that lived prutty high after they got out. Some disappeared, too, sudden-like. There was 'Squill' McGree. Know 'im? Dip. Worthless. Got out. Bragged of his pull—had money, too—an' they took him to the dead-house. Get me?"

"No idea as to who this 'mystery party' is?"

"Not an idear."

"Doesn't it strike you as queer that he would recruit from jails—if recruiting is what he is after—when the really good crooks are not to be found there?"

"They all get it." Connolly was explaining—in a way defending—his own fall.

"True. But the best ones—like yourself, for instance—learn how to keep out. Doesn't it seem queer that this mysterious person doesn't get in touch with those? Yourself, for instance?"

"By God, it does!" he cried, suddenly seeing the question as I wished him to see it. "Hadn't thought o' that. But say, if he's the guy they say he is an' is stirrin' up all this stuff, he's a wonder."

CONNOLLY referred to the well-nigh innumerable crimes that filled the police records. The situation was regarded as almost desperate. Not only robberies were numerous, and all the petty—or, rather, smaller crimes, but assassinations were attempted with audacious frequency, and murders were alarmingly common. The city was agitated. The entire country gave a rather fearful attention to this so-called wave, and the police were desperate.

"What 'd you make of it?" Connolly asked, as if expecting I could offer a solution.

"In a way it looks to me like this unknown—this mystery person—doesn't know crooks—doesn't know where to find them or how to get in touch with them. So it is only when they get into the newspapers or jail that he hears of them. Only when they land in jail that he knows how to get in touch with them."

"Something to that—maybe."

"But on the other hand, you know what's happening in the country. Senator Chapman was killed last week at Washington. Who did it?"

"I get you."

"And, though it was not in the papers, you know a shot went through the window of Gardner's house some ten days ago. Millionaires can keep things out of the papers, you know."

"Heard it was a chauffeur he'd canned."

"Did you? Well, why couldn't a chauffeur be employed as well as another to shoot Gardner? And how about Congressman Stevens? He's in the hospital. Maniac, they say. Only the police didn't get said maniac."

"What'd this mystery guy want to bump all them off for?" Connolly demanded.

"If you will tell me who this mystery guy is, I'll ask him."

"I don't know. I don't know anybody what is willin' to say as they do know, either."

"And, of course, you won't talk in your sleep, or anything like that, and let anybody know that I am interested? It might be embarrassing if he found out about my interest in him before I found out something of his identity—if there is any such creature."

"Got a bum memory, myself. Can't remember nothin' that's said to me more'an ten minutes. But on the level, do you think there is such a guy?"

"There is somebody that seems able to have a knife stuck in anybody he wants to have it stuck into. Now, unless he does

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the butcher work himself, he must be in touch with some crooks—bad ones. Why don't they tell him of the others—of the good crooks—the clever ones?"

Connolly was thoughtful.

I added:

"When that fellow that cracked Friedlander's was bailed out, he got on a train for Washington. A detective followed him. The detective had his throat cut and was thrown off the train. Somebody was watching and ready."

"An' they croaked that fellow, too," Connolly cried, referring to Gowan McFarland. "Wonder what happened?"

"Maybe the police know," I suggested.

"Maybe," he repeated scornfully. "I'll tell you what happened. The fellow shot off his mouth—same as Squill McGree. An' they croaked him. I never heard anybody say so, but things as happen happen because something else happens, see?"

I replied that I did "see" and asked again—

"You are sure that you haven't a suspicion of who did it?"

"Not a suspich. But, take it from me, there's a lot o' bull about this mystery guy. You know how things get started an' keep goin'?"

"But Gardner, Chapman and Stevens—somebody got them, or came near it."

"Now listen," said Connolly. "What's to show that the same guy was after all three? Get me? Jack Robinson is shot, and Bill Smith is shot. But that don't show the same fellow shot 'em both."

"Quite plain. But supposing that tomorrow morning Senator Rawlins should be found dead? What would you say then?"

"Who's he?" Connolly asked with a kind of impatient unconcern.

"Well, for one thing he is the man who has been trying to work out a bill giving the Department of Justice police powers throughout the country. The way it is now, the Secret Service can't interfere with crooks unless they break a Federal law. And, if Rawlins' bill went into effect, it would turn the Secret Service loose on crooks everywhere—Federalize the police of every town and city."

"—— bad law," said Connolly reflectively, no doubt visualizing the difference between dodging and hoodwinking the city police and doing the same to the unobstrusive but ubiquitous Federal officers. "Was them other fellows for it?" he asked.

"Gardner, Stevens and Chapman? They were. One—Gardner—is a 'reform' millionaire. Chapman was a 'reform' legislator. Stevens is a 'reform' legislator, too. All were in sympathy with Rawlins' plan."

Connolly sat in silence, studying this new angle that I had suggested. Before he spoke, Snips' shrill voice broke in from a distance upon our attention. He was talking loudly—unmeaningly loud, it seemed—but polite.

"Tall gent wid black suit? Nifty? Purty lean-lookin' guy wid a long nose? Yep. Dat's him. He was here, but he goes out. Didn't say where. Maybe youse run down to Tony's, youse 'll catch 'im. I tell youse he ain't here. Well, look. Better look under de chairs, too."

Two men had come in, and it was to them that Snips was talking while they looked about scrutinizingly.

"Detectives?" I asked.

"Dicks," Connolly affirmed.

"Which way out?"

"This way," he said, rising quietly. "Watch the floor. Broken here. It comes out in a basement—Rozalie's dump—fence—'cross the street. Built God knows when. Bang on the door an' say 'Peanuts.' I'll tell 'em I heard you say you was to meet a guy down at Tony's. Anything I can do—you know."

"Yes. Send Snips to me in a day or two. He has brains, that boy."

"Great kid. I trained 'im. Here they come. So long."

We had made our way to the farthest shadow of the cellar-like basement, and, guided more by the pressure of Connolly's arm than by sight, I stepped through a door into a narrow unlighted passage. Then I heard the door click behind me.

Snips, by raising his voice and giving something of a description of me, had craftily conveyed to my ears a warning that I was not slow to heed; and he had succeeded in doing this while assuring the skeptical detectives that I was not near. The other detective—the one whom I had somewhat embarrassed in the presence of Conrad Hearn—had probably put his fellow officers on to my trail. But the law was out of luck that evening.

I slipped into the dark, fetid, damp passageway, heard the door click behind

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me and, taking a small flashlight from my pocket, made my way along the dripping, scum-covered walls. At the other end I knocked softly, then loudly. I knocked loudly several times and was beginning to be a little apprehensive that there was nobody to let me out, when by a sudden inspiration I said the ridiculous password—

"Peanuts."

The door open instantly, as if before the Arabian cave I had spoken the magic "Sesame." A decrepit hag beckoned me out into a littered, tumbled cellar, filled with what appeared to be ragpicker's loot.

"I'm making a getaway," I told her and slipped a piece of money into her grimy hand.

She gave me a sharp look and silently led the way to a door, from where I made the street.

In another hour I was secure and comfortable in my own apartment and laying plans for another visit to Antoine Gaboreau. My idea of something to worry about is a visit to Antoine Gaboreau; but I knew that he knew more about the dark currents of crime than anybody else I could light on, and I was determined to have information, no matter from what source.

V

MY FIRST introduction to Antoine Gaboreau had been made some years before, but not until after I had entered his house by stealth and crawled up the banisters to avoid the burglar-alarms attached to the steps of the stairs. He had not wanted to meet me and had tried to prevent all future meetings by not letting me get out of the house alive.

Since that time our fortunes had been more or less entangled. I did not understand him at all, but I had the decidedly uncomfortable feeling that he understood me thoroughly. He was an enigma, a madman with a white flame of a brain. One thought of Gaboreau only in terms of lunacy—and yet there was something more, something deep, something cold, immovable and resolute.

Also, I had known moments when he was passionate or dignified or gallant. But usually he taunted, jeered, bluffed and lied. He fought in the only way an aged cripple could: that is, by trickery, cunning, cruelty. But he could not be frightened, and, when aroused, he was implacable. Yet I should not say that without reservation, for, just about the time that I had been doubly sure that he was the most villainous and dangerous creature alive, he had been known to do desperate things to help me.

There is no doubt that he was a terrible man. It is charitable and no less truthful to say that he was a lunatic—often a maniac. He had a powerful and brilliant mind—and the feeblest of bodies, being paralyzed and withered from the waist down. Until Germany lunged and sprawled like a mail-clad octopus across Europe, Gaboreau had been a criminal as another man might have been a gamester. He had gathered under his control a legion of cunning ruffians. He plotted, directed, and they executed.

The police could not run him down. They heard his name, but they doubted his existence. Using much the same methods as this mysterious unknown whom I was now trying to locate, Gaboreau had shielded his identity. He had not operated on anything like so large a scale. But the duplication of methods struck me as a sinister coincidence, though I really did not believe that Gaboreau was the Unknown. The war had changed Gaboreau, and I liked to believe that the change had been internal and deep down.

In his day he had done daring and ingenious things—bloody enough, in all faith—and had no more of a purpose than to get funds sufficient to keep his gangsters well-paid. He recognized no law of God or man and snapped his bony fingers at the sanctity of life. The consciousness of having great crime-power seemed to give all the satisfaction he got or wanted from such work.

But, after the war began, he changed. He had been a cavalry officer in the Franco-Prussian War, and the paralyzed legs followed the wound of a German bullet. Having a great energetic brain and a helpless body, he had turned to crime, planning like a strategist and commanding like a field-marshal.

He never said so or intimated it, but at times I felt, or rather hoped, that the ruthless, cruel attacks of deep-plotting Germany had brought home to Gaboreau—who loved France as only Frenchmen love—that there was something Hunnish about his own warfare against society. At least

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I liked to think that something of the kind had had its influence and been responsible for the apparent change.

This terrible old fellow had placed me deeply in his gratitude, though he would not acknowledge any friendship. I had once done his niece a service. Gaboreau had canceled that by fighting—with a knife in his withered fingers—for my life; and, even while he struck to ease my fortune, he swore that I was his mortal enemy. And that some day, in his own fashion, he would make me regret the many times I had interfered with him. However, I was beginning to doubt that he had any such intentions.

With all the fierce intensity of his nature he had turned to war books and war maps. He had given his entire attention to following campaigns from day to day—his entire attention, except for a time when it looked as if the Federal Government would not take sufficient interest in German spies. With terrible vengeance Gaboreau turned loose on a "nest" he had uncovered. The Federal officers did not have to bother any more about that crowd of spies. I had, more or less unintentionally, or rather accidentally, been of some service to him at that time.

Then he returned to a comfortable home and, for the first time since I had known of him, made no real attempt to conceal his whereabouts. He gave himself over unreservedly to war maps.

Our relations were somewhat complicated by the fact that a boy nephew of mine had married that niece. He had gone to war as an aviator, and she as a nurse. All might have been somewhere near agreeable between Gaboreau and me if he had not known that I had planned to have him stowed away in a comfortable asylum. That was where he really belonged. He was harmless so long as war maps held his interest, but, if again he should turn to crime—well, I was pretty much reassured by the thought that he would never do it as long as America was the ally of France.

When Vivian disappeared, I had been more than half fearful that he had been responsible. He had told me I should repent of that asylum plan; and he knew that the surest way to strike me was by hitting Vivian. And for him there was no satisfaction in revenge unless his victim knew who was inflicting the torture.

The first visit I made to him, inquiring of her, he said:

"I am sorry, Everhard, I had nothing to do with it. And I hope you worry till *you* go to an asylum!"

"But I have no reason to believe your regrets."

"Some day," he had said ominously, craning his long, thin neck forward and glaring at me, "you and I are going to come to an understanding—but it won't be behind a woman's skirts!"

"No, indeed. You usually hide where it is more difficult to find you."

Tempestuous and fiery he was, often hysterically furious—but, at the most unexpected moments, calm, emotionless. He had sat back, looked at me with a certain quiet scorn and said:

"You have both hands in your side pockets, and each hand holds a gun. You can shoot quicker than I can wink. Your chauffeur is probably listening at the door with a shotgun. No doubt you have left a letter where the police can find it, saying that, if you disappear, I am to be arrested. And, having taken these precautions, you come in here to insult a poor old cripple and to accuse him of kidnaping a wife that couldn't live with you. I've sometimes thought you had brains, Everhard. Brains. But, no—you just have suspicions." Then seriously, earnestly, convincingly, "You know that if I had had anything to do with her disappearance, I wouldn't have lost a minute telling you about it—so you would have started worrying. There's only one redeeming thing about you, Everhard. You do know when you've been a fool—don't you?"

And, strange as it may seem, I nodded. I realized that he had spoken truth. If Gaboreau has snatched Vivian away, he would promptly have let me know about it. That was the truth—but that wasn't the thing that actually convinced me.

He had said:

"Get out of that chair. Step back to the door—and watch."

I did.

Before my eyes a square hole appeared in the floor beneath where I had been sitting, and the chair plunged downward into the cellar. Gaboreau had only to have touched the spring at his desk while I was sitting there and I would have been caught in his trap.

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"Now, you see," he said, "I could have dropped you down there in my special cellar—oh, I have enemies yet, Everhard—and then told you what I had done with your wife. Or rather with the woman who couldn't put up with you any longer. Good-by."

And he had bent over his maps, ignoring me, leaving me there like a rebuked schoolboy.

I was convinced. I left as noiselessly as possible—slunk out, so to speak.

BUT, following the events already spoken of in previous pages, I determined to ask further questions of Gaboreau. So I visited him again.

I found him in what he called his library, his arms on the table and chin propped against his palms. He was staring down at a map dotted with pins. At one end of the room was a fireplace in which a broad bed of coals glowed. Though the room was lined with shelves, these were not filled with books. Much of the space was vacant. Gaboreau would have no books around except those he enjoyed reading, and he had once remarked that there weren't enough books of that kind in the world to fill so much space. On the desk was a newspaper containing the latest reports. The floor was littered with discarded newspapers.

Gaboreau was bald and withered. His head was large, far too large for so small a body. The nose was rather long and hooked—the nose of a predatory man. His lips were thin; his gums toothless, or nearly so; and the sharp chin came up as if in time hopeful to meet the long, hooked nose.

It was in the sunken eyes that the spirit of the man burned like a flame. He was disagreeable in appearance, disagreeable in personality; yet there was a fascination about the man. For one thing, he seemed the embodiment of force—will. There was nothing to him but brains. I felt that fascination every time I came near him. Others felt it, too.

Gaboreau raised his eyes and stared at me.

"Now what do you want?" he demanded irascibly.

I said nothing. Very quietly I moved the chair so that it was squarely on to the trap-door—by closely observing the carpet, I could detect the exact place—and sat down. Then I put both hands in my lap—clear away from my pockets.

None of my parade of confidence was lost on him. He smiled, cackled.

"You tempt me, Everhard. You tempt me. —— you, I've liked you only because you fight. And now you come in here like a spanked pup."

I ignored the taunt—though it did hurt.

I was silent and, looking at him, tried to appear as if I knew very well what I was going to say. But I didn't. Before I said anything, a servant came in and quietly laid a package of afternoon papers on Gaboreau's desk. He had special delivery of editions as fast as they came from the press, and, without glancing or speaking to me, he began hastily glancing at the headlines. In a moment more he was bending over his map and adjusting the pins according to the latest news.

"Gaboreau," I interrupted, "who's the greatest crook—now?"

He jerked his face up at me.

"Ask your friends, the police."

He knew how I disliked and avoided the police.

"Somebody has been studying over your shoulder. He is using your methods. This crime wave is put down to him. Who is he?"

"You've become a policeman and expect me to become a stool-pigeon?" he screeched.

"Gaboreau," I said quietly, "Waller, Waller & Ishman bailed out the young man caught at Friedlander's. He went to Washington—where his throat was cut. He knew me. I am pretty well-known to burglars and such. And on his body was found a note in Vivian's hand—a note that warned him of dangers and also referred to me."

Gaboreau was silent for a time. He looked at me, but his thoughts were ranging far and wide.

"Have you questioned Waller, Waller & Ishman?" he asked, not so much with a helpful intent as to indicate what a stupid, short-sighted individual I was.

"There is only one way to get information out of a crooked lawyer—with more money than he can make by keeping still. I can't bid against the Unknown."

"Your wife's handwriting?" he asked.

"Yes."

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"How do you know it was?"

"How do you know there's a fire in that grate? Have eyes."

"What do you want of me?" he snarled suddenly.

"Information."

"You fool, what do you think I am? A magician? I see nobody. I hear nothing. I go no place. There isn't even a telephone in this house. These—these—" he indicated the newspapers— "are all I read. And you suspect me—suspect me of taking the time from following the victories of France to meddle in your little personal affairs! Suspect me, do you?" he demanded in the high tones of indignation that often pass for injured innocence.

"That I have been in the room for some twenty minutes without shooting ought to indicate that I do not!"

He laughed in derision.

"You are like the Huns. All the time talking about shooting somebody. To cut a throat," he laughed with sinister amusement, "requires an artistic eye and a dexterous wrist. Like Shaylor used to have."

"Like who?"

"Shaylor—Dorel—remember? God, how he hates you. I don't blame him. I'd hate you, too, if you made me run to a penitentiary for a sanctuary."

I remembered Dorel, or Shaylor, as he was known to the police. There had been some trouble between us. But there had, I knew, too, been some trouble between him and Gaboreau.

"Is Dorel the man I'm looking for?" I demanded.

"How do I know whom you are looking for? You are always looking for somebody? And do you think Dorel has brains? You haven't any—if you do."

"This Unknown seems to be collecting crooks out of jails. Maybe's he's got Dorel. You didn't take yours out of jail, Gaboreau. You preferred those that weren't catchable. That's one reason I don't suspect you."

"If you want to find out who he is, be a crook—and get caught!"

"I am serious."

"I," he said with sudden intensity, "am more serious!"

"You know, Gaboreau, that I am more than half suspected of being a crook, anyway. I've had to scrub pretty hard to keep my skirts clean."

"Be a crook—be a crook. That's my advice. I mean it. You want advice. There it is."

"And get caught?" I asked cynically.

"Good crooks are never caught. They cease to be good ones—then."

"Not every one has your ingenuity."

"Call me a crook! Your impudence! Me? Idiot, you. You don't know everything—Everhard. Not quite. Why, the Secret Service comes to me for advice!"

HE WAS an uncanny liar. I might have believed, for he did seem often to have the secrets of black magic, that he could summon the devil and give that sulfurous gentleman pointers, but that Gaboreau would be sought out for anything but hanging was incredible.

Why, even when he had done the Secret Service a favor by exterminating the spy-nest, he had done it with such blood-letting completeness that, if they could possibly have got evidence to connect him—and evidence to connect Gaboreau with anything was about as rare as the devil's good works—he would have been, I thought, in a fair way to be hanged.

"And now you want to be friends with me!" he added.

"I do not."

"Everhard, you remember that time and time and time again, I have sent to you asking that we be friends? You were scornful. You talked of shooting this poor old man—" he tapped his thin breast— "made long speeches about your honor!" He was lying and he knew it; but his purpose was to torment me for having said something about never being friends with him. "Everhard, did it ever occur to you that you can not name one crime and swear that I did it? That I inspired it? You may think so. You may believe it. But can you swear it?"

That was about as audacious as if some one had asked me if I could swear that black was black; though for the most part Gaboreau had hidden his identity and detached himself from his crimes so that circumstantial evidence alone connected him with them. But I said—

"Yes. I can swear to it—to many."

He lurched forward with something like a growl and glared at me. In a moment he demanded—

"You can?"

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"Yes."

He straightened up.

"Do you know what would have happened if you had said, 'No'?"

I shook my head. I looked around.

Within three feet of me, having come noiselessly across the thick carpet, was a huge negro, a ferocious, monstrously muscular black giant. Within six inches of my head he held a big revolver.

I was surprized, of course, but I was not frightened. If Gaboreau's intentions had been dangerous, he would have precipitated me down the trap-door. But he enjoyed theatrical effects—and no man knew better how to get them.

I admit that it took some effort on my part, but, having looked the negro over, I turned my head and ignored him. It is easier to face a squad of cocked rifles than to feel one little revolver at the back of the head—and the revolver that negro carried was not even little.

"You still insist that you could swear against me?"

"Yes."

It wasn't bravery on my part so much as perception: I had seen through Gaboreau's attempt to frighten me.

He cackled.

"Stubborn as ever. Stubborn. But what do you think of Hugo? He's my body. Brain here—body there. I have enemies, Everhard. I've made it plain where they could find me—hoping they would come! They may. Then we won't be enemies any more. No. I'll send flowers to their graves and speak well of them. I'm a poor old persecuted man, Everhard. All alone except for servants. And I have troubles. I don't know who that Unknown is you are after. But it is easy to find out. Turn crook and get caught. I'll help you, Everhard. Oh, I'll be glad to help you. You know how well you can trust me!"

So it was that he mocked me and mocked himself, hiding what he really meant behind words and leaving me more puzzled than ever. He asked many questions, about Vivian, about her note, about my suspicions, about what I thought of the throat-cutting—"artistic, isn't it? Wonderful accuracy"—and rambled so that at last, seeing I was getting nothing or no place, I was impatient to get away. But he talked on, mentioning his "enemies" again and laughing hideously. I was uncomfortable.

Another batch of evening papers was brought in. He eagerly flung one open and bent over it. Gaboreau cried out surprized; his face changed in an instant to stony composure, and he looked queerly at me. There was no war news in the headline. It screamed—

SENATOR RAWLINS MURDERED.

"Do you know why?" I said suspiciously, standing up and pointing down at the paper.

I had begun in spite of everything to mistrust Gaboreau. And, incidentally, in standing up I had left the trap-door and thrust a hand into each of my side pockets. Gaboreau would never sign for the negro to shoot at me while I had himself covered.

"Do you know why?" I repeated.

"Yes," he said looking steadily up at me. "Somebody wants to see me hanged for it! Chapman and Stevens, too."

"How much did you have to do with it?" I demanded.

"How much— Oh, I did it all," he said sarcastically, sneeringly. "I make a business of killing Congressmen and Senators in war time! Especially patriotic ones. —— you, Everhard——"

"And —— you, Gaboreau," I said slowly, angrily. "Rawlins, Chapman and Stevens were trying to make the Federal police national—to do away with city departments and grafting cops—and you know how long such crooks as you would last under such a system!"

"I wish to God they had such a system," he snapped. "It would do away with nosey, meddlesome, self-appointed guardians of law and order like you! Hugo, carry me to bed!"

The big negro put his gun away, walked behind the desk and, lifting the withered body in his arms, started out.

"Wait," I said. "I haven't finished the conversation. I want——"

"In a minute, in a minute," Gaboreau cried petulantly. "Let me get into bed, can't you. Take me upstairs, Hugo."

THE negro walked out and up the stairs and left me standing there. It was not usual for me to let anybody do what they suggested rather than what I wanted. But there was something

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so pathetic about Gaboreau, so pathetic in spite of all I knew of him, that I did not interfere. I waited at the foot of the stairs until I thought he had had time to be put to bed. I knew that Gaboreau put in much of his time in bed, and it had been obvious that he was shocked by the headline just unfolded.

But no one reappeared. I went up the stairs. I knocked. I opened doors. I made a racket. I came down. I went through the house—and out back. Not a person was in sight.

I came into the house and searched thoroughly.

I found no one.

Gaboreau and the servants had evidently departed the back way, while I—like a green snipe-hunter—held, so to speak, the sack.

Nothing seemed to have been touched or removed.

The departure had been made in desperate haste. Gaboreau from under my nose had slipped through my fingers.

The door-bell rang. I answered it.

I opened the door and at once wished that I had not.

There stood a detective. I recognized him instantly as one of those that had come to search for me after Conrad Hearn and his guide had left the Hole. I had caught only a glimpse of him and his partner that night when Snips cleverly gave me warning, but that glimpse had been sufficient. He was suspicious and meant business.

"I want to talk with you," he said, pushing his way into the house.

"What can I do for you?"

"Your name Ducot—or Gaboreau?"

"No. Did you wish to see Monsieur Gaboreau? Just come in here."

I led him into the library.

He sat down; and, as a familiar of the house and playing the rôle of belonging there, I sat down at the desk.

"Now," I began, "if you'll kindly give me some idea as to your business I'll communicate with Monsieur——"

"I'll do the communicatin'. I'll do it. What's your name?"

"Mine?"

"No. The Pope o' Rome's. Who do you think I'm talkin' about? What's your name?"

"Rawlins," I said.

It was the name uppermost in my mind at that moment.

The detective made a movement of surprize, a startled movement.

Then, with an effort at great shrewdness he asked—

"Any relation to Senator Rawlins?"

"Perhaps."

The detective moved in his chair. His left hand slipped up and exposed the badge on his vest, and the other hand slipped down to his hip. It was apparent that for some reason or other he was about to place me under arrest. He even began to say so as he also began to stand up—but suddenly the floor gave way beneath him, and I caught a glimpse of a frightened, incredulous face and clawing arms as he plunged from sight.

I released my finger from the button at the desk, and the trap-door swung back in place.

I bent above the trap and listened. I could hear an amazing amount of profanity coming forth in hearty tones. I decided that it would be a waste of time to try to explain to that detective. Anyway, he was prejudiced against me. So I took my hat and departed—mystified greatly at the turn things had taken.

Some of the mystification was removed during the next two or three days by the newspapers. The assassin of Senator Rawlins had been caught, and under "pressure" had confessed that he had been acting for Antoine Gaboreau, who was responsible for the murders of Senator Chapman and Congressman Stevens, also, as well as for the attempt on Gardner, the millionaire. The name Gaboreau was well known to the police, but they had had little faith in it.

They believed—and well they might after pursuing the shadow so long without ever catching sight of the body—that he was a hoax "embarrassed" crooks used to explain their activity. Detectives Watson and Perkins had been sent out to investigate the residence that the confession had named. Detective Watson had waited in the rear while Detective Perkins tried the front. After an hour of waiting Watson had gone into the house to discover what had become of his partner and, attracted by an unusual amount of noise in the cellar, had with difficulty been able to rescue the unfortunate Perkins.

Perkins had had a great tale for the reporters about how Gaboreau had had the impudence to say his name was Rawlins,

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and then drop him—Detective Perkins, his important self — through a trap-door. It was well that the rescue had been effected, for that night—though the police had been watching the premises—the house was fired and burned down.

The most amazing and inexplicable thing to me in all this was how Gaboreau had known, the instant he saw the news of Rawlins' death, that he would be accused of it.

And, brood over the facts and fancies in the whole case as much as I did, I could not arrive at a conviction as to whether or not Gaboreau was the unknown crook, though it seemed to me pretty well established that he had planned and attained the murders that culminated with Senator Rawlins' death. However, I determined to find out and began to lay plans which I was sure would come to something.

VI

IT WAS, I think, about a week later that the newspapers were freshly agitated with accounts of robberies of one kind and another. It was all a part of the crime wave, though crime flood would have seemed more appropriate. There was a good deal of nonsense written about the "daring" of the bandit who put a gun under the nose of surprized and defenseless people and took from them their money and jewelry, at the same time inquiring in a tongue-tied fashion for their names and addresses.

He was, said the newspapers, undoubtedly an eccentric bandit—his disguise indicated this, also—who kept a list of his victims as a matter of record. This bandit, it was further said, dared do anything and he acted as if there were no such thing as police. The police, however, were doing everything they could to run him down.

One would have thought that this was an easy matter; for, if the victims were to be believed, he was a conspicuous figure. All were agreed that he wore a long, black-and-white-striped overcoat—a very unusual sort of coat in itself and one that could hardly fail to attract attention any place. He used a white silk mask that completely covered his face—but did not conceal the impediment of speech. This was marked. Some said that he talked like a man with a split palate, and others that it was as if he had a mouth full of hot mush. He was an exceedingly tall man, according to the report, or perhaps merely seemed so because he invariably appeared in a high top hat. People judged that he was in evening dress. He was called a "society" bandit and I don't know what all else. But the fact that he kept the long overcoat buttoned did not permit any one to make sure what kind of dress he was in. Every one said that he was polite and calm. This added to the legend that he was a "society" man.

A certain person mentioned before, by the name of Burgess, connected with the police department and invested with more authority than he deserved, was not unknown to me. One of the reasons that the gambling-house I most frequently visited was well protected from police raids was due to the fact that Burgess was a regular patron. Of course, this house operated under the name of a private club; its membership and clientele were very carefully chosen.

Burgess was fat and had a weakness for poker. Faro and roulette are the chosen games of a house. With them the action is quicker, the bets bigger and the profits certain. But those who wanted a poker game could be accommodated. And, though I may now frankly admit having been a professional gambler with all that that implies, I was not known as such in the Phoenix. I may pause to remark that there is no such thing as an "honest" gambler—if he consistently wins. At that time I manipulated the cards only sufficiently to keep my hand in; I was in no particular need of money, and my wants were modest.

On an afternoon when the papers were devoting some extra attention to the "striped society bandit," Burgess and I were alone at a table, dealing stud and betting perfunctorily.

"When are you going to catch him?" I asked. "The mystery bandit?"

"I'm tired o' these mystery people. No mystery about him. Just a plain clever crook. Ace in the hole."

"You win. It's a wonder he doesn't stick up some of these private clubs—rich as mints."

"Couldn't get in," Burgess explained. "Password—being vouched for—and all that. You've a pair in sight. Bet."

"But how about that other mystery—

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the one that bails crooks out and lets them jump their bail?"

"What do you know of him?" Burgess asked quickly—almost, I thought, a little suspiciously.

"If the papers are to be believed, I know about as much as the police. Nothing."

"He's Gaboreau. That feller confessed down at Washington. Gaboreau jumped. Think o' it, Everhard. He'd been livin' at that house for months under the name of Ducot! But we've pinched a hundred fellers—all 'Gaboreaus'—an' never laid eyes on 'im yet! But that bandit—I'd like to get my eyes on him once. I know 'im next time. I can look right through a disguise. No bold bad bandit about him, either. Sticks up machines in lonely places——"

"And asks the names and addresses of his victims. Don't forget that solicitous attention."

"That's just a stunt. Say, are you playin' stud or interviewin' me?"

"You're winner. You'd better quit and tell me your grievance against the newspapers. They seem to have one against the police."

"It's unjust!" Burgess shouted angrily, throwing the cards down and jamming a rather bulky cigar into his mouth. "Who says anything about the thousand and one crooks we catch ever' day? Nobody. A policeman walks his post night and day, an', if he don't happen to be on the very spot that has been carefully selected by a crook because he won't be there, why—there's a big roar. Good God! Do you know the crooks in this city outnumber the police about ten to one? That's conservative. An', because some striped bandit pulls something, the newspapers raise a holler. I hate newspapers, anyway."

"How about Chapman, Stevens and Rawlins?"

"That's up to the fellers in Washington."

"But Gardner—the millionaire?"

He looked at me queerly, as if he could tell me something surprizing about millionaires in general, but said nothing.

"And Gaboreau? He's been in your midst some time."

"Rub it in. Rub it in," he said good-naturedly. "You've got a reputation, Everhard, as a bold bad man—but I notice you stay —— close to the right side of the law! You're always careful to explain that some naughty crook was kickin' you on the shins before you cut loose. But they do say—" his voice dropped into an inquiring, confidential tone— "that the Secret Service has used you for years an' that's why you're always mixed up in somethin'."

"They say wrong, Burgess."

"O' course, you couldn't admit it. I know. I'll keep a close mouth. If the newspapers found it out! I hate newspapers!"

"I hadn't noticed that they had been referring to gambling lately."

Sometimes it took a few seconds for things to get across to him. He looked at me vacantly for a moment—then grinned. Burgess was, in a way, a good fellow. No hypocrite.

"There you go. Suppress gambling! Bah. What's an insurance company but a big gambling-house ready to bet that your house doesn't burn, or that you don't die before you pay in more than it has to pay your wife? What's a business man but a fellow that bets the public 'll buy his goods? It's all a gamble. Some o' us like poker. Some like stocks. A man like Conrad Hearn's nothin' but a—say, Hearn's comin' here tonight!"

"Really?"

"I'm bringin' him, too. He's all right. Got a head, that feller. Sent me a letter sayin' he knew there were no gambling-houses in the city that the police were aware of, but all of his life he had wanted to see the inside o' one. And——"

"That wasn't the letter in which he asked for a guide and guard to see the slums?"

Burgess eyed me hard.

"You know a lot o' things, don't you?" he asked almost angrily and quite surprized. "No, it wasn't the same letter. Is my secretary on your staff—or what?"

"You forget," I explained, "that my acquaintance with crooks is rather large. They tell me things. Naturally an item of interest like Conrad Hearn walking around with a Headquarters man would attract attention and gossip."

He did know that I had an unusually large acquaintance among crooks; and he seemed to have rather explained it to himself by the theory that I was a Federal agent. It is often easier to let men explain things for themselves than to try to do it for them.

"Some day I'm goin' to find out all about

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you, Everhard," he said half seriously. "I told Hearn that he was right—there are no illegal gambling-houses known to the police. Isn't the Phoenix incorporated? Didn't good lawyers show how it could be done? Isn't a judge on the house committee an' one of the share-holders? The duty o' the police is to uphold the law. The district attorney can go to ——. I told Hearn I would be glad to have him as my personal guest any evenin', and he picked tonight."

"What time?"

"'Leven. Be here?"

"What's the use? He won't play poker. And, if he does—well, he's learned more about bluff and developed more nerve on the Street than you or I. The police are good at bluffin', I admit; but as for me——"

"As for you—yes. That's enough. You've stole pots when I had you beat in sight. An' I hate a thief for makin' me feel like a fool. I often feel a fool here at the Phoenix."

THE Phoenix was a three-story stone building, severely plain as to exterior, with a fashionable furrier on the ground floor. The furrier was subsidized to conduct his business at a loss because the fur business helped to obscure the character of the upper stories. Though the Phoenix had, with the help of some clever attorneys, been given a lawful standing—or what was hoped might in a pinch be maintained as lawful—many precautions were taken to direct attention from it. The district attorney was a notorious raider and often took what the police consider their private "rights" into his own hands.

The street door, on being entered by a pass-key, opened into a tiny lobby where there was another door, guarded by a uniformed keep who had a cunningly contrived peep-hole. Once past the second door, one walked down a narrow, heavily carpeted hallway to the automatic elevator. It was automatic, but could be thrown out of gear easily by pulling a lever in the secretary's office up-stairs. The narrow stairway that led to the first floor was barred by heavy oaken doors, reinforced with ornamental brass. It would take some time to chop through.

The first floor up was much like any other club, very richly furnished with deep carpets, massive chairs, red velvet curtains at the windows, bookcases and tables with current magazines in racks beside them. This was quite a comfortable lounging-room, with potted plants and dimmed lights suffusing the rooms with a warm glow. It appeared to be an ideal retreat for tired business men.

On the top floor was where the devil got his dues. There were roulette and faro layouts, and built into the wall were secret chambers where they could be stored in case of a raid, in event of which all players would have been found comfortably chatting and reading, or playing at cribbage and dominoes. On this floor a supper was served at one o'clock and all the seasonal dainties were furnished, together with choice liquors.

There was no charge. Nor was there any charge for the tobacco and liquors served during the play. All was free, quiet, comfortable, dignified—respectable. A visitor was never urged, never even asked—it was never so much as suggested that he should play—to sit at the tables. There was no need to urge. Few men can resist the lure, especially when they have dined well and see every one else wooing the wheels of fortune. There were card rooms, too, and naturally a percentage of each pot went to the house.

Occasionally a house man would sit into a game if a choice victim showed up and insisted on poker, but usually the "members" were left to themselves. I was in very good standing with the management as a consistent loser at faro. A good part of what I won at cards I dropped on the faro table; and the secretary, a Mr. Brownell, appreciated my "courtesy," though he never mentioned it. Had I selfishly protected my poker winnings, he might have mentioned that.

I may as well acknowledge that one reason I took the trouble to be welcome at the Phoenix was largely because no respectable club would have tolerated me as a member, and there were no "unrespectable" places where gambling was permitted. These had not had lawyers draw up their papers. And I like to gamble. It is now recreation as it was once the sole source of livelihood. The Phoenix was the nearest to a respectable club that I could attain, though I knew very well that its roulette wheels were wired, that the faro-boxes were fitted with springs and needles, that marked cards were used in poker games when house men played.

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Naturally I had taken the trouble to discover the key to the markings. Marked cards are used only by those whose fingers are less skilled than mine, and more than once, to add zest to the game rather than to protect the so-called "sucker," I have seen to it in my deals that the house man would have an almost unbeatable hand and the "sucker" would, nevertheless, have one that just did beat it.

So it may be observed that I knew the Phoenix very well and had some enjoyment out of my "membership."

All of the pay-and-sell house funds were on the top floor. The secretary's wired desk was the cashier's office. When the play was at its height, along about two in the morning, there were usually between thirty and fifty people in the house, and each—if he hadn't already lost it—with a fair amount of money in his pocket.

Naturally, in view of the fact that despite police protection the district attorney might attempt a raid, I had carefully and quietly studied ways and means of escape. The plan of the management, in case of a raid, was to stow the paraphernalia and sit tight as a private club. I had had no real assurance that the district attorney wouldn't batter in the panels and drag out the layouts.

I knew that a fire-escape was behind the heavily curtained and locked window of the pokerroom where Burgess and I were playing that afternoon. He went out first, and I slipped my hand behind the curtain and felt of the latch. It was a little stiff from lack of use.

I joined Burgess, who was chatting with Brownell. The latter was wondering how heavily Conrad Hearn would want to play.

I suggested that it would not be easy to make the play interesting to a man who used millions for counters.

"True, true, Mr. Everhard, but you know there is no limit of play at the Phoenix, and he may take advantage of that."

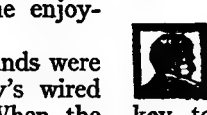
"It would be embarrassing if like another famed financier he should want to 'bet a million,'" I said, though knowing very well that it would not in the least embarrass the Phoenix. Not any more than it would have embarrassed me to accept a bet for a like amount that on the following morning the sun wouldn't rise.

"Indeed. Indeed," said Mr. Brownell. "But we try to accommodate our guests. Will you be here, Mr. Everhard?"

"I may drop in later—around 2:30."

"If he says 2:30, he'll be here at 2:30," Burgess declared puffily. "Never saw a man who paid as much attention to seconds in keepin' appointments. Kin' o' religion with 'im."

"Very correct. Very correct," Mr. Brownell approved, bestowing a smile upon me.



SO IT happened that at precisely twenty-five minutes past 2 A.M. the following morning I applied my key to the outer door of the Phoenix. This opened into the tiny vestibule which was barred by another heavy door where the watchman was on guard. He opened the door and gave me a pleasant "good evening," then hastened to call down the elevator for me.

I got in and pressed the button for the top floor. When I stepped out, a curious sight was before me.

Some thirty-five men—all in evening dress—were standing in a row, faces against the wall, with arms lifted high over their heads.

"Amateur night?" I asked pleasantly, clicking the elevator door behind me.

Some thirty-five faces furtively peered over shoulders at me.

"Shh-hh-h-h," some one whispered warningly. "He isn't gone yet!"

"He's in there!" another whispered tensely, jerking his head toward a card room, the door of which was closed.

These were curious faces: some drawn and pale with fright, others painfully bored, and one or two, particularly that heavy, powerful face of Conrad Hearn's, looking pleasantly amused.

"Simon says 'Thumbs down!'" I ventured.

My fat friend, Burgess, pulled his arm down and turned around with an angry puff and several highly colored oaths.

Instantly a babel of voices, most of them in rather awed and cautious tones, broke loose. All cast apprehensive glances at the closed door. Some remained stationed by the wall even after lowering their hands. The voices came at me in phrases:

"The striped bandit——"

"Call the police!"

"He in there yet?"

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"Cleaned everything!"

"I wanted to say to him——"

"I'd know him any place——"

"Three times he came out——"

"Call the police!"

"Call the police!" Mr. Brownell snorted scornfully.

His hands were still up in the air, though he had walked some fifteen feet from the wall. It was to him that the Phoenix had looked for the strongly fortified doors to keep out the police and other agents of the law.

"He's in there, I tell you," one nervous youth exclaimed shrilly, casting anxious glances toward the card room door and continuing to stand close to the wall so that he could promptly face about if the angry bandit broke out again.

I gathered that he had burst out two or three times after everybody was sure that he had gone.

Burgess dropped heavily into a chair and thrust a large cigar into his mouth. Then he laughed:

"Cool as a cake o' ice, that feller! —— 'im."

"Somebody open the door!"

"Everhard," said Burgess, not wholly serious and remarkably unembarrassed at being a police official in such a predicament, "it's up to you. Open the door. Let's see if he's fainted or somethin'."

"Not I, Burgess. As a public servant and a target large enough to keep all innocent bystanders out of harm, it devolves on you to investigate."

"I say call the police! He's still there!" shouted the nervous youth.

"Oh, shut up!" Burgess growled, not quite sure but that the youth was rubbing it in.

"I can call spirits from the vasty deep," murmured a quiet young man with a look of boredom.

"Yes, so can I," an elderly man casually replied, "out of Shakespeare. But will they come?"

"About as readily as that bandit—and be about as welcome!" said the bored young man. "Notice the size of his guns. Young howitzers."

"I'm sorry, Mr. Hearn—wholly unexpected—nothing like that before—er—you see—well—it's too bad!" Mr. Brownell was trying to apologize to Conrad Hearn, who listened politely but with his eyes on me.

"Who's goin' to open that door?" wailed the nervous youth, still by the wall.

Burgess swore and, striding forward, flung open the door. He did it without bravado and without drawing the gun which I knew he carried. No coward, Burgess, and no poser.

A moment's expectant hush—then a rush forward into the card room. The poker table was covered with discarded wallets and papers. Apparently the robber had taken plenty of time to sort his loot. The curtain, sucked by a draft through the open window leading to the fire-escape, showed how the bandit had come and gone.

"Did he get much?" I asked Brownell.

"Much!" That distrait fellow lifted his hand in a gesture of despair. "Everything! Two hundred thousand, anyway—besides what he took from the gentlemen!"

"I had three thousand on me!" wailed the nervous youth.

And, no matter how much I felt like correcting him, there was nothing I could say.

"Very bold, don't you think?" Conrad Hearn was speaking to me.

I looked at him doubtfully for a moment, then smiled.

"My name is Richmond," I said, putting out a hand. "I was sorry to embarrass you some nights ago, but that detective was unbearable. Perkins, I believe."

"He was," said Mr. Hearn simply. "He ran across two other detectives later and asked them to go and pick you up."

"He did! How lucky I left early. I was there out of curiosity. But I resented his manner."

"But this striped bandit, Mr.—ah—Richmond. He was the coolest thing imaginable. Exceedingly bold, too, don't you think?"

"Bold?" I asked slowly. "I am rather of the opinion that he was a sure-thing gambler. No chance of a complaint. The Phoenix doesn't want publicity. It can't appeal to the police. Burgess will do what he can in a quiet way—but the risk was small. The sight of a gun hypnotizes men —always, unless they are trained from childhood to use or face such things. Then they have sense enough to act as though hypnotized. Sensational, perhaps; but I wouldn't call it bold."

"I tell you I would know that man any place," a man was saying loudly, and we paused to listen.

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"I wouldn't," said Burgess simply. "I can see through disguises—but not lisps and overcoats!"

"I would," the other insisted. "I admit I was scared, but I took pains to notice. Little things—that's what counts. He had a big signet ring on the little finger of his left hand."

Conrad Hearn idly glanced at my left hand. No one would recognize me by jewelry at any time. It might be done by the lack of jewelry. I wear none. Then, as if apologizing for his glance, Hearn said:

"It's true. He did have a big ring. And the nimblest fingers. He went through my pockets in a flash. Experienced—that fellow. With his fingers."

"Professional gamblers have fingers like a pickpocket," I said.

But then he lost the significance of that, not knowing I was a professional gambler—or at least had been one.

"Partly tongue-tied, too," another commented. "'Now zhentlemen, I wahnt shu to do az I zay.' Notice how he spoke?"

"Tongue-tied! He's a foreigner," some one protested.

"What about this fellow? I can hardly get an impression from this conflicting chatter," I said to Conrad Hearn, who still stood near me and repeatedly looked in my direction with a kind of reserved amusement as much as to say, "What do you think of all this?"

"WHAT about him?" he asked. "Here's a couple of chairs. I don't know that I can tell a more coherent story than the others. But it seemed to me that all that happened might have happened in a well-rehearsed comedy. Understand me, Mr.—Richmond—I'm not trying to appear—well—not trying to appear as if used to things of the kind. But it never occurred to me to be frightened. I suppose it was because this striped bandit was so cool.

"Everybody was absorbed in play. It was so quiet you could almost count the clicks of the ball. I was not playing—really don't understand games of the kind, but it was interesting, intensely interesting.

"The first thing I heard—the first thing any of us heard—was a voice—a rather foreign or tongue-tied voice, I don't know which—saying, 'Hands up, zhentlemen, an' faith to ze wall like good poys!' And there, just outside of that door, stood a rather tall man in a long black coat with white stripes, a white mask entirely covering his face, a tall silk hat sitting well back on his head, and two guns—automatics—in his hand. Big guns, they were.

"There were many exclamations and startled gestures. Surprizing, you know. He was very calm about it. I can't remember his words, but he politely assured us that he didn't wish to harm any one. But, as we must be aware, the walls were soundproof, and he could do what shooting was necessary without attracting attention from the outside.

"Somebody—Mr. Brownell, isn't that his name? The secretary? Yes. Brownell started tiptoeing for the elevator, but the bandit called him back and lined him up against the wall with the others. I was interested—you may smile, Mr.—Richmond. But I was. Very! I peeped over my shoulder and saw him drag out the young man there from behind the cashier's cage. Then he went in and helped himself to the money. Quite a lot of it, I understand. He took his time about it. Absolutely calm. Then he came back and went through our pockets one by one. He asked each for his name and address. You may be sure I didn't give him mine!

"I tried to get some close glimpse of him, but he was effectively disguised. I noticed that his shoes were very dusty." We both glanced down at our shoes. Mine were even more brightly polished than the banker's. "I saw the ring on his little finger, too." I casually looked at my fingers, too. Jewelry, in any form whatsoever, I disliked on my person—though I often think it pleasing on others. "But that was all. Not another mark.

"Then he went into that room and shut the door. We began to pull down our hands and talk. Then the door popped open, and he said that it would be better if no one moved or spoke until given permission. Then the door shut again.

"Well, it seemed an hour—I suppose it was only a few minutes—when we were sure that he was gone. But out he popped again and declared that so much gabbling disturbed him, and would we not keep quiet? Think of it!

"It must have been a quarter of an hour at least—and did you ever stand still with arms raised for a quarter of an hour? It's a good way to find out how long is

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eternity—before another word was spoken. He opened the door right away and swore that without further warning he would shoot the next man that spoke. That's why we were so quiet!

"I suppose we would have stood there till morning without daring to make another sound if you had not come in. What was it you said? I remember—'Simon says, "Thumbs down!" ' That was excellent.

"I wouldn't have missed this evening for anything. I have an inordinate curiosity to know who the man is. To meet him."

Just then Burgess waddled up and dropping a heavy hand on my shoulder, exclaimed—

"Of course, Everhard, nobody is going to say anything about this—all quiet, you know."

Conrad Hearn looked at me queerly. I had told him my name was Richmond.

"Say anything?" I asked. "Why should I?"

"If it gets into the papers—whew!" Burgess blew between pursed lips to indicate what a mess it would be.

"I am sure Mr.—Mr.—" Conrad Hearn hesitated. It was well done. Somebody had to come to his rescue with my name.

"Aren't you introduced yet?" Burgess puffily exclaimed. "Mr. Hearn, this is Don Everhard—the greatest gunman in the world. He's well-known out West. Here, too. If he had been here, Mr. Striped Bandit would have been on his way to the morgue by this time. Everhard can pot butterflies with either hand."

"My name *is* Richmond," I assured Conrad Hearn.

"Richmond! Hump. Nobody knows you as Richmond. Haven't you heard of Everhard, Mr. Hearn?"

"Yes," said Mr. Hearn, looking at me in a way that indicated he had heard much. "You are a detective—or connected with the police, aren't you?"

He asked it slowly, as if putting a question of importance.

"Hardly," I replied.

"Police! Him? I should say not!" Burgess almost shouted. "He's a— I don't know what you call him. Sometimes people that the police are lookin' for pick on him by mistake—then they don't bother the police any more. What would you call a feller like that?"

"Public servant," I suggested.

Burgess snorted.

"But 'Everhard?' " Mr. Hearn asked.

"It does have a boastful ring, doesn't it? I once took the name when I needed something to remind me that I must not be 'soft.' And it stuck."

"You have been a detective?" Mr. Hearn seemed insistent on that point.

"Not I."

"Your name—Everhard—is familiar. I never—seldom, that is—read the papers—carefully. I remember your name, though."

"Yes. The papers have secured me several vaudeville offers." Then, "Oh, Burgess," I said, turning toward him where he stood fumbling with his depleted pockets, evidently trying to figure out how much of his had been plucked by the bandit's nimble fingers, "I suppose if you did grab this striped bandit that mysterious person would hasten to bail him out?"

"Sure, Waller, Waller & Ishman would be busier than a dog in a cat hospital."

"What mysterious person?" Conrad Hearn asked quickly.

With a gesture I indicated Burgess, saying:

"One of his fantoms. The police always keep a supply on hand for the reporters."

"Reporters, ——!"

Then he told Mr. Hearn all that he knew or thought about the mysterious person who was playing havoc with the courts and the police. Mr. Hearn listened with riveted attention.

"That's astonishing!" he exclaimed to Burgess.

I said nothing. Burgess was too busy with his empty pockets.

"I wonder—" Mr. Hearn was addressing me—"if there is any way that I could help in apprehending that fellow?"

Strange, I thought, a millionaire—a billionaire—wanting to chase crooks. But millionaires have queer interests. And, as for his chasing a crook—I remembered involuntarily that, if some of the rumors of his methods were true, Burgess might advise him, in the slang of the day, to "chase himself."

"Ask him." Again I indicated Burgess. "He is all the time lamenting that the public doesn't take enough interest in police work."

"Aren't you interested?" Mr. Hearn asked with strange intensity.

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"I? No."

"You never contribute your services to the police?"

"Not intentionally."

I arose. Something in Conrad Hearn's manner—perhaps in his eyes—I don't know where—irritated me. Besides, I had business elsewhere.

THEN I left. Conrad Hearn, with an interest I would not have suspected had I not seen the queer gleam in his eyes, began talking to Burgess of his desire to be of assistance to the police. And Burgess, quite overwhelmed, was all eagerness.

I left the Phœnix and walked about two blocks to my machine.

Jerry was dozing comfortably inside.

"A long wait, Jerry?"

"No, sir. Couple o' hours. Easy."

"I hear the striped bandit has been abroad again."

Jerry laughed in a quiet sort of a way and climbed up to the seat.

And off we went.

Jerry Kelly had formerly been a safe-burglar—an artist. Big and burly he was, with a touch sure and sensitive as a surgeon's. An odd thing—such fingers attached to Jerry's body. He had married a lovely little girl and reformed—or said that he had and tried to be truthful.

Jerry was quite devoted to me and exercised his touch and mechanical genius by experimenting on the innards of the car.

I had given up the large house after Vivian wished for a divorce. It was her house, anyway. I had taken quarters in a quiet little apartment in a most respectable—or rather expensive; it is about the same thing—neighborhood. Because I valued Jerry and had fondness and respect for Mrs. Kelly, I saw to it that they had an apartment next to my own. But I lived entirely alone, except for Yang Li, my mute Chinaman, a watchful, silent old fellow whom everybody disliked.

When I went in, Yang was standing just inside the door waiting for me. Whether he had sleeplessly heard me coming—his sense of hearing was abnormally acute—or had been waiting, I did not know. I never knew, and Yang always waited for me in the same way.

I gave him my hat and stick—a soft felt hat and a slender but strong stick with a bowed handle—and my overcoat, which was long and light-weight and black, with a black silk lining. If any one had investigated the lining carefully, he might have been a little surprized to see something rather new in the art of tailoring. The lining was detachable, being held in place by little black-headed snaps at the edge of, and up and down, the seams. A curious coat. But, then, I am always particular about clothes.

I went into my small room and sat at a typewriter, where, with no great skill but much care, I thumped out a full report of the Phœnix robbery, mentioning a few names—not Burgess' or Hearn's—and referred to the robber as the striped bandit; and, having made several carbons, I put each into an envelop and addressed each envelop to a newspaper. It did not suit me to have this robbery unknown, uncommented on.

The Phœnix itself was a robber's nest, crooked from top to bottom, and I felt under no obligation to it. I wanted publicity on the striped bandit. I had doubts as to how the mystery person—the bailer and defender of crooks—with whom I expected to get in communication at no distant day, would hear of this most sensational exploit unless the newspapers were informed.

I sent Yang to drop the letters into a box, and, while he was gone, I took from my pockets all the money that I had snatched from the Phœnix.

Brownell had lamented the loss of some two hundred thousand dollars. The nervous youth had cried out that he contributed three thousand dollars. Both were mistaken. I never knew a man to suffer loss by robbery yet without exaggeration. I had less than a hundred thousand dollars, including what had been taken from individuals as well as from the bank. The jewelry and such I did not estimate. I sorted the bills, making them into neat packages and pasting a band of paper about each, to give the appearance of having been drawn from some commercial house. Then I did them all into one parcel and addressed the same to the Society for the Relief of Belgian Children.

Nobody's name was to appear as the donor. I was not playing Robin Hood or anything of the kind. It was not my purpose or method to take from the rich and from sure-thing gamblers and give to the

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needy. The money was incidental to my work. I simply had to attract the attention of the mysterious person who had put Gowan McFarland to death, who had—I believed—violently seized Vivian and who was playing a desperate game with law and jails; and I had to attract his attention by genuine crime.

The white silk mask I used covered my entire face. I could carry it in a vest pocket. The tall black hat was merely a collapsible opera hat, selected, first because it could be compressed when not in use, and next because I was about the last person that any one would ever expect to see in such a thing. I managed the tongue-tied accent by keeping the end of my tongue against the base of my front lower teeth, and that disguised my voice past all recognition or identification, because normally I speak very distinctly.

The stripes, from which I had got my name, were strips of white cloth arranged on the inside of my reversible coat, from which I could easily remove and replace the lining when I wished to expose or conceal the stripes. I chose stripes so as to make my operations the more conspicuous. I wanted the striped bandit to have a reputation—to be worth bailing out of jail, if he ever got there. To wear a ring on the little finger or to have shoes dusty and then remove ring and dust were merely little details that seemed to aid my purpose.

There was nothing bold or desperate about the things I did. I was careful. I watched and planned. But I was determined to become notorious enough to interest the mysterious collector of crooks.

VII

THE affair at the Phœnix made some commotion; but public sympathy seemed to be with the bandit. The upshot of the agitation was that the Phœnix was compelled to use discretion, ostensibly close its doors and secretly remove to other quiet quarters.

I was one of those to whom Brownell confided the new location, and I received an invitation to visit it frequently.

Two people knew I was the striped bandit; none others. Yang Li, I fancy, knew it, although he gave no indication of the knowledge. And Jerry. He drove the car when I overhauled wayfarers and those abroad late at night. It required neither shrewdness nor courage to carry out that form of plundering. In fact, I have only contempt for crooks who work from behind a gun. It is as cowardly as a sneak-thief's pilfering. My admiration for crooks—such as it is—is due to their loyalty, their generosity, their readiness to sacrifice everything for friends. Men with such qualities in them should not be casually and irrevocably dumped into prisons.

I was working toward another end than money, and those of my victims who refused to give their names and addresses, or gave false ones, might have been surprized to know that they contributed to various charities. Without the information which I always requested, I had no way of returning the stolen property. I did not return it at once but inscribed the name and address and put the loot aside until my work was finished.

I did those things calculated to make the striped bandit notorious. I tried to give everything a sensational aspect—as for instance the wearing of a striped coat.

I did not want—I did not intend—to go to jail and be bailed out by the mysterious person. I tried to discover some way of getting in touch with him otherwise.

I wrote Waller, Waller & Ishman a letter saying that I, the striped bandit, realized that I might soon be in need of legal representatives, and I enclosed a cash retainer fee. But I gave no intimation of address or identity.

The deep-brained Ishman, fearful that it was a trap laid by the district attorney, who was always on the jump after that rascally firm, carried the money and letter to the district attorney and got some advertisement for his "honesty."

I had known that Waller, Waller & Ishman served the mystery person I was after, but I did not know at the time how effectively he had kept in touch with them without in any way allowing them to get in touch with him.

However, with Jerry's help — Jerry laughed at locks—I entered Ishman's house, roused him from his bed in the small hours and from behind my silk mask had a talk with him. No guns were displayed. No threats were passed. He said that, if I would take off my mask, he would agree to do all that he could to serve my interests, my legal interests. I told him that any

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one who carried letter and money to the district attorney was not to be trusted too deeply with confidences.

I learned nothing from him, except that he was no coward, was unscrupulous and was brainy and a most convincing liar. I thought it just as well to have Mr. Ishman permanently on my staff—that is, absolutely devoted to my services.

So with Jerry's expert help I plundered the private safe in his bedroom and carried off some bundles of documents. I don't know what they were. I never inspected them. It may seem odd, but, though I could steal confidential papers, I could not bring myself to read them, since I knew they would have no personal bearing on my affairs. Ishman's anxiety and frantic promises were sufficient to indicate that the papers were just what I needed.

"Any time," I told him, "your attitude toward me is displeasing, these will find their way to the newspapers and from there to the district attorney."

Having made Mr. Ishman comfortable as possible with a gag between his teeth and cords around his hands and feet, Jerry and I withdrew.

Ishman kept that incident to himself, or at least out of the papers; and I had no desire for publicity on it, either.

I met Burgess frequently. He was worried, nearly desperate. He trusted me, probably because he believed that I was a Federal agent; or maybe it was because I seemed to have no wants, no axes to grind, and asked no questions—that is, none but natural questions.

About this time I received a curious communication from Gaboreau. It puzzled me some. There was no telling what Gaboreau had in mind by what he said. He was a spider, that man, and something more. He wrote to me that he had been a fool, that I was the only man he had ever met whom he knew he could actually trust, that he was now helpless and "about to be boiled in the devil's pot—where I belong, perhaps." He did not ask help from me, or favors, as one might expect after the prelude of flattery. He did say to me:

You are the only resource I have left, and I am being honest with you. Felix Dorel has intended for a long time to cut your throat. You know why. He would like to cut mine, too. Kill him, Everhard. Kill him on sight. I'm a helpless old man—no friends, nothing.

There was something more, written in furious anger against Dorel, but nothing enlightening except that it showed Gaboreau's old bloodthirst was lose again. The letter ended, and below that diabolical outpouring of rage flashed this postscript:

Perkins lit on a mattress. I had it there for you. Did he swear much? Thank you for playing host when I had to leave in such haste. G.

The newspapers had informed Gaboreau of what happened; but Detective Perkins did not mention a mattress.

As for Felix Dorel: I did not need Gaboreau's warning to know that I would probably have to settle with that fellow if we met; but why the old man should be so furious toward him, I did not really know. I suspected that it was because Dorel himself was furious toward Gaboreau.

Some time before, I had been the cause of Dorel's landing in the penitentiary. My name did not appear in the matter. But Dorel knew, and so did Gaboreau. Dorel had been very close to Gaboreau when Gaboreau was at his most terrible. Dorel escaped from the penitentiary—I had always thought with Gaboreau's assistance. But I knew something of how Dorel felt because Gaboreau had not prevented his going there in the first place.

Perhaps that was the cause of the quarrel—if there had been a quarrel. One could not believe Gaboreau at any time except by other evidence than his own mouth. Dorel did not have one tenth of Gaboreau's brains; he was a cunning butcher and used a knife. It occurred to me that perhaps Dorel's knife was at the command of the mysterious person who had killed Gowan McFarland.

Perhaps Dorel had kidnaped Vivian. But would he, I asked myself doubtfully, have kidnaped my divorced wife for purposes of revenge on me? It did not seem likely. And, so far as I know, he had never seen Vivian.

I MENTIONED Gaboreau to Burgess. It seemed queer to me that the assassin who had confessed against him had lived so long afterward. Each morning I expected to read of his death. It did not appear. This was unlike Gaboreau. He, no less well than the mystery person, could and did strike even through stone walls at "snitches" and dangerous witnesses. The parallel in their methods troubled me.

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"Aw, Gaboreau," Burgess answered with an impatient gesture of disgust. "I'm off that stuff. No such feller. Somebody with that name, perhaps, more likely to be just the monniker a lot of crooks take. Say, in five years of Gaboreau stuff not a single cop has laid eyes on him. Have you?"

"You said the other day that Conrad Hearn was taking an interest in the police. Helping you look for the striped bandit?"

It was thus I changed the subject to two of Burgess' favorites—Conrad Hearn and the bandit.

Hearn was an enthusiastic subject. The bandit a tender one. Burgess had tried hard to discover how that Phœnix story leaked out.

"Mr. Hearn's takin' a great interest in that mystery feller. There's a real problem, Everhard."

"It is rather unusual—a man like him to be studying crime. He visited the Hole, too. A sight-seer, I believe."

"Be surprized," said Burgess, "how crooks and crime fascinate these leading citizens of ours once they find out about it."

"The mystery, romance, adventure."

"That's it. I love the work myself! Only right now I'm in hot water—ears deep. —— the newspapers!"

He balanced his fat body on his heels while a ludicrous but earnest expression came on to his face. A grafter himself, yet he saw nothing wrong with what he did.

Burgess fitted into the system. Though he had little part in actually chasing criminals, he was to a large degree responsible for the effectiveness of the police and had access to, if not control of, its secrets.

"Mr. Hearn wants to meet you again, too. Eager."

"Millionaires are out of my—my—caste," I assured him.

Conrad Hearn had already twice invited me to visit him, once at his club and once at his home. I evaded both invitations. I did not see how he could be of service to me, and he seemed to be interested in me only because of my reputation. There was no mutual interest. Besides, I was busy trying to make a gentleman out of Snips.

SNIPS was a clever boy, very intense and full of emotions that he did not understand and which often troubled him. He had nothing of what is meant by "education," though there was probably never a boy who went through college and knew so much about life as Snips knew at nineteen. Snips wanted "education." He could read, and he did read—anything.

He was soon devoted to me. Evidently Joe Connolly, who had been great in his day and was still considered great by the ambitious gangsters, had said such things as made Snips, feel that I was pretty much all right. Anyway, we soon became friends—though I was not as innocent in cultivating that friendship as was perhaps entirely honorable.

I knew, however, that I would do all in my power to keep anything harmful coming to Snips, though I intended to use him as a catspaw. Anyway, Snips was proud of his reputation among police in his neighborhood. They knew him for a "bad 'un," and he wanted publicity.

Snips came to my apartment frequently. He was encouraged to come. Yang Li's presence, however, seemed something of a discouragement: Snips did not like him. But he came to see me and took precautions to keep the "cops" unaware. Snips liked to feel that he was being shadowed. He was young. But I encouraged this feeling in his visits to me. He explained:

"Dey got deir lamps lit fer muh! An', if dey seed me waltzin' up here, dey might crab your game. So I pinches a set o' glad rags frum Joe an' disguises meself wit' a haircut, an' nobody'd know I ain't a bank clerk er somepin'."

"Crab my game?" I asked, wondering just what this sharp-brained youngster might think.

"Sure. Youse a reg'lar feller, Joe says. Funny 'bout Joe. He says, 'Snips, yuh trow Mr. Everhard trouble an' I'll beat yuh ter death—like hamburger.'"

"But my 'game'? What do you think it is?"

"Huh? I ain't cur'ous. I don't butt in nowhere. All guys has a graft. Me, Joe, ever'body. Some is counter-jumpers; some nicks de kicks; an' some stows railroads in deir pockets. Conrad Hearn—he gits away wid de biggest graft 'cause—well, 'cause he's a banker."

"What do you think I do?"

"Joe says youse lightnin' an' t'under wid a gat!"

"But, Snips, I can't go around shooting people to get into their pockets."

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Snips turned his lean, wolfish face at me for a moment in studious interrogation. He appeared to be debating with himself as to just what I could do for a living.

"I dunno. But Joe says, 'Youse stick by Mr. Ev'hard an' youse'll wear di'monds.'"

"Or stripes!"

"Like de strip-ed bandit? I'd like 'em. Cops are a bunch of turnips, ain't dey? Let a guy git away wid all dat."

"How would you like to go to jail, Snips?"

Silence. Long silence, while he stared at me.

"How about it?" I asked again.

"Me? I'm deaf in dat ear what yuh spoke to!"

"With a lot of notoriety—pictures in the papers—ladies crowding to see you——"

"Sounds like moider. I wouldn't hoit a fly."

"And then be discharged without ever standing trial—merely a case of mistaken identity."

"Huh?" A new interest was in his voice.

"Think it over, Snips. Pictures in the papers and ladies bringing flowers."

"Me? I loves posies."

Inch by inch I tempted Snips and at last won him; and I set about putting on what a thin—though very thin and transparent—veneer of culture could be applied in a few days.

NIGHT after night the striped bandit continued his depredations. One of his most astonishing stunts—it was a stunt, nothing more—was to hold up a man and a woman in the private room of a fashionable restaurant while the place was crowded. He suddenly opened the door, wearing the mask but carrying the coat, which, holding them covered with the gun, he put on. Then he robbed them and, after robbing, gagged and blindfolded them; so it was easy to refasten the lining of the coat, remove the mask and step out without attracting attention. Incidentally, in his haste to depart he dropped the loot—all of it. So they lost nothing but their appetites. Of course, there had been some risks—that of the waiter unexpectedly appearing. But one must accept a small chance now and then when after publicity. The striped bandit got it.

Then some fellow was caught up who confessed to being the striped bandit. There was a big hullabaloo and chant over his capture.

That untoward event was something I had not anticipated; and I did not like it. He, too, was after notoriety—newspaper notoriety.

My answer to his confession was to hold up six automobiles between midnight and dawn. The police recovered the loot promptly, for the simple reason that I put it into a valise and left it in the anteroom of a broker's office. I had taken the precaution of putting an alarm clock, a large one, a loud ticker, inside. Somebody heard the ticking, and there was a general exodus from the office—from the building, in fact—while clerks, stenographers, brokers and a great crowd waited apprehensively in the street—tying up traffic—until the courageous police had been called.

A small squad of detectives rushed in and doused the valise into a tub of water—the tub having been hastily procured for that purpose. Then valise, tub and all were carried to the station, where, after waiting long enough for the supposed bomb to be thoroughly soaked, they opened it. More publicity for the striped bandit!

The imposter in jail was wholly discredited, and another hue and cry was raised for the striped bandit, who was beginning to be suspected of having a sense of humor.

I did not get so much amusement out of this as one might perhaps think. I was very much in earnest and systematically working toward a clear, definite end. I knew—or judged from the note found on Gowan McFarland—that the mysterious friend of all bad crooks was not only holding Vivain but perhaps forcing her to aid him, and I was too troubled by the thought of her constant danger to enjoy anything.

In a few days my plans were completed; my program was made out. I had worked on Snips until he was ready, anxious to go to jail. He thought it would be a good joke on the police. I did not take him at all into my confidence. We were simply playing a good joke on the cops, and he was not to mention my name.

"The only thing for you to do is to keep silent as the Sphinx. You know the Sphinx? Partly woman and partly lion—in Egypt. Why a woman should be chosen

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to symbolize silence, I don't know. Because it is carved out of stone, I suppose. But don't admit anything. Don't say anything except that you have been caught. Keep your tongue against your lower teeth, and nobody will be able to tell you are from the Bowery. Smile knowingly. And keep silent. Can you?"

"Muh broder is de oyster."

So after a few days of comparative quiet the striped bandit again broke loose and for three nights running made fair ladies shiver to the depths of their silk stockings. He transplanted rings from fingers and necklaces and pendants from fair necks and ears into his own pockets. It was a rageful press and a furious police department—as Burgess confided to me. The striped bandit had aroused the city at last.

Then Snips was arrested.

There was no doubt about his being the party wanted. I am not sure, but I think that something like twenty-two of his victims positively identified him.

His arrest came about in this way: He got into a taxi one night with a suitcase, and presently the chauffeur, upon glancing around, was amazed to discover that his passenger had been transformed into one wearing a tall silk hat, a striped coat and a white silk mask. Also a large gold ring on his little finger of the left hand.

The chauffeur, not being of the stuff of which heroes are made, precipitately drove his car into the curb, hit the middle of the street with one wild jump and raised such an outcry that a crowd gathered on the run; and with the crowd came a policeman.

Poor Snips never had a chance—even if he had wanted one. He had not been able even to fling the trappings off, though he seemed to have tried. The policeman put a big revolver into his face, and Snips—speaking with his tongue pressed against his lower teeth—said—

"Aw wite! 'Ou win!"

And Snips would not say anything more, either then or when he had been carried off to a cell.

Incidentally, the two guns found on Snips were wooden. They were well enough carved to decieve any nervous person at close quarters; but they could scarcely be called "weapons."

He was photographed and questioned, written up and visited and at once became a very conspicuous figure. Of course, he was soon indentified. There was much surprize expressed that this gutter-rat had taken—successfully—to silk-hat banditry, but that was explained in words of vast dimensions by a wise psychologist who was persuaded to write of the matter for one of the more enterprising papers.

Snips craved to be a gentleman. That was the wish deep down in his soul. So, averred the man of science, he combined desire with disguise and dressed as a gentleman in his raids on society. At least I gathered that was what the psychologist wished to convey. Had he been writing to confuse the reader he would not have written much differently.

Anyway, as Snips lay a week in jail and no striped bandit appeared at large, it seemed that there was no longer doubt but that he had been captured in the person of this queer, slender, wolfish youngster.

I am sure that one of the most worried men in the city was Ishman. By turning my letter and retaining fee over to the district attorney, he had practically assured that formidable gentleman that he had no connection—and would have none—with the striped bandit. And yet Ishman knew, or believed that he knew, what was in store for him if he did not come to the rescue of Snips.

To Ishman it seemed better to follow a line of conduct that might arouse the strong suspicions of the district attorney rather than to follow the one that would certainly place papers and documents in his hands to confirm the very worst suspicions. Crooked lawyers have their troubles as well as those few who more tenaciously respect the unwritten law of gentlemen.

He visited Snips in person. But Snips would say nothing. He knew of no papers, of no threats. The wily youth maintained an inflexible silence, and this attitude did not add to Ishman's comfort.

Now, of course, Snips had not been given a striped coat resembling mine; so the secret of that disguise was intact. I might as well add that the psychologist guessed right—how could he have guessed otherwise?—when he said that the bandit had worn such a coat in order to be unmistakably conspicuous.

Burgess visited Snips and asked me to go along. But I pleaded a lack of interest in the fellow. Conrad Hearn had the interest in him that I lacked, but even he would not

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run the gantlet of reporters to visit the criminal. Burgess said that Hearn read everything about the case and asked many questions.

I had told Snips to sit tight and wait until he was bailed out or permitted to escape, to let others do the talking but to accept all offers of release.

VIII

ONE morning about the time that Snips was arrested, I received a visit from the house detective of a jeweler, a well-known jeweler, who had done a great deal of Vivian's work from special designs drawn for her. She liked bizarre ornaments and tried to have rings, necklaces, earrings and such so contrived for her as to be different from those any other woman would ever wear. In the course of her purchases she had secured a pair of pendant earrings, fashioned to resemble tiny swinging censers, such, I believe, as the ancients used for burning incense. They had been designed especially for her and, as usual, with the understanding that they should never be duplicated.

Vivian had been greatly pleased with these trinkets and instead of growing tired of them—as was usual with her—had shown for them an increasing attachment. So, when the earrings came in to this jeweler's for repair, there was some surprize that they should have been brought by a woman unknown to the house. She gave the name of Clare Goold.

The house detective, though well informed on the news of Western divorce courts, was sent to me to inquire discreetly if these earrings had left Vivian's possession with her knowledge and consent.

Of course, I had no way of knowing. But I was quick enough to express suspicion that they had not. I found out that she had worn them when she disappeared, and so I was even more interested than Mr. Holben, the detective, anticipated. I did not let him know the true cause of my interest, saying merely that, though Mrs. Richmond and I had separated, we had remained the best of friends and that I would go to almost any length to discover how and why and by whom the earrings had been taken from her.

Of course the jewelers knew much of our private affairs. It is one of the mysteries of shopkeepers that they do know those things. And it was a delicate matter to call the attention of those earrings to a divorced husband, but far more delicate to give him permission to spy on the unidentified customer that had brought them for repair.

However, any one who knew me would know that about the last thing I would ever do is make a disagreeable—or at least a noisy—scene. I am not instinctively polite, but I am instinctively quiet; the two are often mistaken for the same thing.

"Clare Goold—she left no address?" I asked.

"No, Mr. Richmond. She will call."

"That means she may come any hour of any day?"

"Yes. We could put her off by saying the work wasn't finished. That would merely delay the delivery. You remember that each earring has three tiny platinum chains holding the pendant. Two of them on one earring were broken. Platinum chains—even small ones—do not break easily."

I explained that I did not want to impose on the courtesy of the house. But it would be a very great favor if the situation could be so arranged that I could loaf in some one of the show rooms until the woman called or sent for the earrings. In that way I could discreetly try to find out who she was and how she came by them.

I said that I would gladly put a book into my pocket and remain all day, or all of any number of days, at the store until she called. Then, while she was waiting for the earrings, I could be notified and come out. I would not, certainly, approach the woman in the store or permit her to know that she had been watched while there.

Mr. Holben said that my request was very unusual but not unreasonable. He would speak to the management.

He did. For three entire days I had to myself one of the little rooms reserved for privately showing gems and such to the more important customers. Not that I was ever an important customer or anything of the kind; but the house was extremely courteous, and it is true that I was more appreciative than I dared to say.

However, I could not help smiling from time to time as I reflected that one of the largest jewelers in the city was so comfortably housing the striped bandit. My

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banditry was finished. I had no temptation. I had never had any for jewelry.

About one o'clock on the fourth day Mr. Holben slipped quietly into the room and said that Clare Goold was at the repair desk awaiting the delivery of the earrings. Other people were there, too, but I might recognize her by the fact that she was vividly dark, rather tall and young-looking, carried a silver net hand-bag lined with red and wore a stole of ermine.

I saw and followed her from the store without being seen. I followed her down the street and gradually drew close and, though she walked rapidly—increased her steps—I followed at her heels for some blocks.

The street was jammed, but I was in no danger of losing her and was not taking any pains to keep her from becoming aware that she was followed.

Mr. Holben had been precise in calling her vividly dark. In fact she was decidedly of the type that I have admired and of which Vivian was the most beautiful woman that I have seen. I do not doubt that Mr. Holben marked the resemblance; but he was too tactful to speak of it. By resemblance I do not mean that one who knew Vivian would be likely to mistake her for Clare Goold nor that, in my eyes at least, they could pass for sisters. They were, to be sure, alike in the blackness of hair, in build and carriage; but Vivian's eyes were something like brown, the pupils large and distinct, while Clare Goold's eyes were black, solidly so. One could not distinguish the pupils.

It has been my experience that, while all women are dangerous, those with black eyes will safely bear the closest watching. There may be no real reason for that observation. Perhaps black eyes have run for me as cards of a suit often do when bringing ill luck at the table. And there never was a gambler but who was in some way a little superstitious. Even I, certainly cold-blooded and rather hard-headed, often feel and am affected by the psychic tingling of "hunches."

I saw her turn in at the entrance of a hotel that I knew very well—that almost every one else knows—and I rather expected that she would go up to a room. I would have followed—even into her private room. But she went into a place where I did not care to follow. There is nothing more out of place in an afternoon tea-room, with its chattering women and dancing, than a lone man. I did not go in. There was nothing left for me to do but keep as much out of sight as I could and pretend that I was waiting by appointment for a belated friend and so do my best at keeping my eyes on the lady.

She had scarcely seated herself when a man who had evidently been waiting for her, though he was talking to other people when she came in, went to her. They spoke familiarly but seriously. I could see both of their faces, but I could not stand there staring at them, though I did return to the door again and again as if nervous over missing some one.

I could see their lips moving, and I could have given much to know of what they were talking. Both were earnest, particularly the woman. I thought of Old Anne, the deaf lip-reader of the Hole. I wished for her. In fact I wondered if she could not be put from time to time to a convenient use. It was something worth considering.

My ménage had a mute Chinaman and a very nearly reformed burglar. A gutter-rat was also under my protection. So I saw nothing forbidding about taking under my wing a female criminal who had come to evil days in an early old age and having her special gift of lip-reading at my service.

THE man I looked over carefully. I deal with men and feel less discomfort than with women. I seem incapable of getting to the inner brain of women. They deceive me, though I trust none of them. But men—I can talk to men. When I say a thing, they believe me. I can get information out of them. I seldom have to use the undignified pressure which I have found most efficacious with women.

A woman thinks that every man wants her to feel that he is a gentleman; and so long as she can keep him gentlemanly in his attitude toward her she can pull the hair over his eyes, pick gold crowns out of his teeth, steal the laces from his shoes. Most women who know me well, or what they think is well, say that I am a brute.

The man was young, too young to be so earnest in conversation before those black-curtained eyes. He was scarcely more than a boy, and he had a boyish, collegian face. I felt a little disappointed, a little afraid

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that it was nothing more than an entanglement of the heart. But I wished very much to know who he was, and I watched the chance to inquire of one of the liveried individuals that hotels employ under the misnomer of "servants."

"Mr. Henry Macree, sir," the man said a bit disdainfully, as if it were scarcely worth replying to one so ignorant, so utterly ignorant, as not to know Mr. Henry Macree.

"Who is he?" I persisted.

An expression of puzzling astonishment greeted that question. I stood by for an answer. It came—

"The nephew of Mr. Conrad Hearn!"

I was expected to be crushed, to at least stagger if not reel in a faint.

"Oh, yes, yes," I said. "Hearn—Hearn? Who did you say Hearn is?"

Flunkeys are marvelous folk. They are possessed of a polite haughtiness, a withering tolerance, that even the old kings of France would have found instructive. Your proper flunkeys convey the impression that they have temporarily been deprived of some royal importance that will soon be restored and that in the meantime they do not wish to forget the dignity becoming to those whose presence is sacred from strangers—who now in their transient, unfortunate situation confer inestimable favor by stooping to the indignity of the least service on your behalf. But, if one arouses their scorn sufficiently, they will often blurt out something of importance.

"Mr. Conrad Hearn," said the footman, or whatever he was, drawing himself to his full, imposing height so his very buttons seemed to rattle with chilly indignation, "is the greatest man in this country!"

By which I understand that the man, who wore—on a much larger scale, of course—much the same garb as that on the trained monkey that scrambles with tin cup in hand to the window-sill and begs pennies, meant the full importance of Mr. Henry Macree. The flunkey in the frigid, enlightening tone of one about to crush stupid impertinence informed:

"Mr. Henry Macree is his heir!"

My flunkey moved off with slow and stately steps.

I knew, however, that the nature of my interest in Mr. Macree was no longer to determine his complicity in the thievery of Vivian's earrings. Not that I was less interested in him. I am interested in everybody who puts footprints in a trail that I take up.

I waited around there the best part of two hours and consoled myself by chewing dyspepsia tablets, of which I had a small bottle. I suppose that house detectives had begun to keep speculative eyes on me. I understand that every stranger is watched in our leading hotels if he presumes to loiter on unexplained business.

I saw that they were preparing to leave. I hurried out and engaged a taxi and waited. Macree had one called and handed her into it alone. She drove two blocks, got out and telephoned. Evidently she had not made connection. Her face indicated it, as well as the short time she was in the booth.

The late afternoon crowds were thick on the street, and I kept close to her, very close. She walked a few doors down the street and turned into a department store. I don't know of a greater labyrinth than the department store, or of a place where I feel more "out of it" than in these American bazaars—all women and floor-walkers. I stuck close.

It was in the drug department that I rounded a show-case and came upon her face to face.

"Don't you think," she said with that peculiarly cutting tone that women use most often when they smile—and she did smile with a kind of supercilious amusement—"don't you think, sir, that you have followed me quite enough?"

"That depends," I said quietly, and I do not think that a muscle flickered on my face, "on whether or not you are ready to give me a few minutes of your attention."

I don't know what she had thought I was. She didn't appear nervous. But, then, women are such actresses that it is impossible to judge by appearance. She had assumed the bearing of one quietly squelching a masher. I understand that women not unconscious of their beauty, or what they think is beauty, frequently feel that men are trying to flirt with them and are sometimes pestered by strange men seeking a friendship without an introduction. Whatever she had thought, my reply was surprizing.

"What do you mean, sir?"

She was no longer the amused lady repelling one whom she could in a way forgive for being affected by her charms.

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"What do you suppose that I mean?" I countered vaguely.

That startled her a bit. Vague answers, if delivered with a wise air, loosen the imagination of the people one deals with; they suspect you of knowledge of whatever they are guilty in. As there are few if any people who are utterly innocent, it is easy with a little well-calculated bluff to take almost every one at a disadvantage and so create anxiety and often confusion.

"I shall complain to the management!"

That was her only trump. She played it, and I followed with—

"Unless you lower your voice you will bring the management and a crowd to inquire into your complaint."

I had her at a disadvantage. I knew it from the first. Any woman with a clear conscience would not have parleyed with me. She would have complained at once and left me to get out of my embarrassment as best I could. But she did not know how much I knew, and so I knew that there was something about her that it would probably pay me to find out. A rather involved way of putting it, perhaps; but the situation was just that. She was afraid that I held ace high, and nobody is afraid of an ace unless they have a hand in the game.

"What do you mean, sir?" she demanded. But she lowered her voice most gratifyingly.

"You are perhaps as good a judge of that as I."

"I don't understand?"

A little pleading, seductive, abused-woman note was beginning to creep into her voice. The black eyes peered at me with troubled wistfulness.

"Indeed?" I asked, not unsympathetically. "Then perhaps you could spare me a few minutes in some quiet place where we would not be so easily overheard."

"Preposterous!"

"Certainly. Utterly preposterous. But necessary."

I was not so sympathetic.

"Where do you want to go?"

She tried to appear a little uneasy at trusting a stranger. No doubt she was.

"I? I want to go nowhere. I merely suggested that *you* might wish to escape ear-shot of others."

"Who are you?" A flash of defiance showed up.

"Really, that depends. Officially? Privately? Publicly?"

That stimulated her imagination.

HER possession of the earrings had in no way implied guilt. She might have found them, or bought them of a pawnshop, or come by them in any of a dozen innocent ways; but that she temporized with me indicated that she was involved in some kind of an affair that would not permit her to dare dismiss an intrusive and slightly enigmatic stranger.

My difficulty, however, was no small one; for, though she might have secrets that humbled her, if I made the slightest miscue, showed that I had not penetrated any of those secrets but suspected something else in which she had no concern, she could—and would—turn on me in an instant, play the indignant innocent and perhaps leave me to explain as best I could to a policeman.

"Where do you want me to go?" she asked.

"I can't say that I want you to go anywhere. I merely suggested that it might be more satisfactory if we could talk quietly—in a taxi, for instance."

She hesitated, looking hard at me. I do not think she decided that I was a blackmailer or anything of the kind. But she was puzzled, naturally.

"All right," she said doubtfully. Then quickly, "But it is to drive only round and round the block."

"You rather overestimate my interest in you—or underestimate my resources," I replied mystifyingly, "to hint at kidnaping."

For a second or two her eyes gleamed with anger. She had decided that I was no gentleman. It was well that she had reached that conclusion so promptly. Matters would be simplified.

Rather sullenly, hesitatingly, she went with me. We found a taxi, and I gave instructions to go round and round the block. I suppose taxi-drivers are not unaccustomed to eccentric instructions. This one did not seem to mind.

"Now kindly be brief and to the point," she said as I sat down across from her.

"Certainly. Those are my sentiments entirely. Will you please begin."

"Begin? I? What do you mean?"

There was alarm in both voice and manner.

"I mean just what you said—brief and

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to the point, Miss—or is it Mrs.?—Goold."

The emphasis I laid on the name was a slight intimation that I doubted the genuineness of it; yet I did not make it sarcastic or strong enough to commit myself to the position that it was a false name. It was merely further stimulus for her imagination: if Clare Goold were an alias, I wanted her to think I knew it; if not an alias, I wanted her to think I knew much about her personally. One learns the value of nuances at the poker table.

"I never heard of such a thing!" she protested.

Indignation was coming again into play, but without a great deal of conviction. She was troubled.

"No?"

"You had better let me out. I was a fool for coming, anyway!"

I said nothing. I sat back and tried to look as if I knew all about her—and tried very hard not to overdo the part.

"Who are you?" she demanded.

"You are mistaken if you think I came with you to be questioned. Rather, you came with me to explain!"

She suffered a tremor of alarm.

"Let me out!" she exclaimed, preparing to get out—or to attempt to.

With one hand I covered the speaking-tube. With the other I held the door to which her hand had reached.

"Sit down!" I said, speaking as if I meant it. And I did.

She collapsed on to a seat rather than sat down. Her face was very pale, and her black eyes were very bright, while her slender body visibly trembled under the combined stress of anger and fright.

I fumbled in my pocket, pulled out a small bottle, removed the cork and held the bottle in my hand so that the label was not visible. It was dyspepsia tablets, anyway.

The vulnerable part of every woman is her face.

"I have here," I said coldly, "a few ounces of nitric. It is a very fierce acid, as you know. I should dislike very much to empty this in the taxi, for if any drop of it fell on to your face it would leave a deep and permanent scar—a very disagreeable burn. Now then, you can cry out and make a scene if you wish. Many people are all about you. They would come to help. The ambulance would arrive in a few minutes, too."

I indicated the crowded street, with thousands of people on foot and in machines about us.

Terror smothered the scream that rose to her lips, and she flung her hands and fur protectingly to her face.

She was a woman, a pretty woman. And, as there was never a pretty woman but would rather lose her soul than her beauty, Clare Goold—as she called herself—sat very quiet and peered furtively with anxious eyes at the little bottle of dyspepsia tablets. It was the only time I ever felt kindly toward my chronic indigestion.

At a gun she might have sneered if she were unusually bold; for some women have the idea—reasonably correct—that a man will not shoot a pretty woman. Not unless he loves her. Many of them seem to have instinctively read this weakness in my face. I never shot a woman, pretty or otherwise. With men it is different. Also with women a bottle is different from a gun. One threatens their beauty—the other merely their life.

Clare Goold very easily imagined the little motion necessary to empty the contents of the bottle on her, and—of course—she began to cry. Since drops of water will wear away granite, it may be possible that tears persisted in will have some effect on me; but, though the reservoirs of wo in women's eyes often seem inexhaustible, I find that the ladies soon grow weary of that manner of pleading if one appears indifferent and sarcastic.

I mentioned—as all husbands quickly learn to do—for instance, that her eyes were becoming puffed and inflamed, the cheeks streaked, by the excess of salt water.

Round and round the block our taxi went, feeling its way carefully through the traffic. Many people passed within a hand's reach of us and were all unsuspecting of the little drama going on behind the wood and glass that moved before their eyes.

"Oh," she sobbed, dropping a corner of her handkerchief sufficiently to take a peep at the bottle which I continued to hold.

"Oh," she resumed, "I am a poor lone woman!"

I never found a woman yet in trouble that wasn't a "lone" one. That word, they think, is at once a justification and a denial of all complicity.

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"Yes, yes. Of course," I agreed. "And it is too bad that you should have been mixed up in the affair that you are in, isn't it?"

"What affair?" she sobbed.

But she sobbed like a woman who cries in rage, not in fear or regret. She was dangerous, that woman.

"Nitric acid burns deeply. A drop makes a permanent scar. It goes through cloth like fire and eats instantly clear to the bone. That is why I chose it."

I didn't know whether there was really such a thing as nitric acid. The name had a familiar ring and a wicked sound. I chose it because it popped into my head.

She shuddered and begged would I please put the bottle away.

Certainly not, I insisted, pointing out that it was much safer in my hand than in my pocket and, moreover, that I expected to have some immediate use for it if she persisted in silence.

NOW, as she was a cunning woman, I had revealed something to her by threatening with the bottle. She knew I was not a detective. Detectives do not use acids on ladies' faces. Therefore, I must be a blackmailer—or a man with a grievance.

I was in doubt. When in doubt, bluff.

"You must know," I said with an easy air, "that I would not take such risks unless I knew enough to make me secure—" I felt anything but secure— "and I don't propose to waste time in telling you what I know or don't know. I am not a detective—" this was frankness: if she had the sense I credited her with, she had guessed it already—"but that doesn't keep me from being in communication with the police. And I expect you to talk."

"Why are you so cruel?" She said it suddenly, sweetly, raising her dark eyes tenderly to me.

I am afraid that I gave a slight grunt. It was no time to be sentimental. Besides, at no time can a woman make a fool out of me by being tender.

"I can't tell you everything," she said resignedly. "It would take hours—my autobiography. But I will tell you anything. What is it you want to know? You are so masterful!"

There is no phrase that so quickly reduces a man to idiocy as that which tells him he is "so masterful." But I had got over being that particular kind of an idiot.

"Anything?"

"Anything," she repeated. "I have nothing to conceal."

"Suppose you begin," I said with a slight smile, as if I knew all about it and were only testing her veracity, "by telling me just how, for instance, you came into possession of the earrings—there!"

I was very much afraid to ask that question. It was all that I really did have to ask her. Of course, I was very desperate to use so slender a clue to abuse a woman and take what risk I was taking in doing it.

But my question seemed to strike her on a live nerve. She gave a start, and a flash of fright illuminated her tear-streaked face.

"Oh God! How ——"

"How do I know? I know many things, some of them about you!"

"Do you know her?"

There was no doubt to whom she referred—Vivian.

"Yes," I admitted.

"Who is she?"

The question leaped out. It was eagerness, all eagerness. And in the click of a second I realized that this woman, and possibly the people who held Vivian, had not been able to identify her. Also this realization gave me a chill feeling; it is harder to identify the dead than the living.

"She hasn't been killed—yet—then?"

I asked it with every nerve strained to convey the appearance of the most casual interest. It would have been giving that woman too much advantage to have intimated what the question meant to me. But the question meant much to her. Surprize, fright, amazement showed on her face. I knew Vivian was in the hands of desperate people to whom one throat more or less was as inconsiderable as a pea-pod.

"Why do you ask that?" Clare Goold demanded.

"I have explained already that it is not I who am here to answer questions."

"You know all about it—her?"

"It would seem so," I said coldly, glancing down at my bottle.

I really didn't mind that last question, but I didn't want any more. I was impatient as a leashed hound that has its muzzle brushed by the tail of a running fox.

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"The fools made a mistake. They thought I was trying to hide from them. Thought she was I—and grabbed her."

"And, of course," I ventured, "they didn't dare turn her loose again."

"Of course not! You really know who she is? She won't tell. And——"

"Where is she now?"

"How do I know?"

Clare Goold's impudence was returning. Obviously she did not like Vivian.

"I didn't ask how you might know. I asked where is she—now?"

Clare Goold perhaps had never had any one speak to her in just that tone. She sank against the seat, and fear glittered in her eyes. I could have killed her and gladly, and she knew it.

"I don't know," she said, terrified. And I thought she was lying.

"Very well. Give the chauffeur your address and tell him to drive there."

"I'm not ready to go home."

I leaned slightly forward:

"If I have to repeat anything to you again, it will be decidedly disagreeable. Tell the chauffeur where to go, and be sure that you tell him correctly. I am going with you."

"You are going with me!" she almost screamed.

"Yes."

"I'll call the police! You can't——"

"I should think they would be about the last people on earth you would care to call. Tell the chauffeur."

She did; then she sank back and studied me with a snaky steadiness in her midnight eyes.

Though there is no gallantry in me, I get no pleasure out of bluffing and threatening women. I feel very much ashamed of myself to remember what I have at times done, but I am even more ashamed to remember how I have been hoodwinked and outwitted by those whom I have tried to treat with consideration.

Hers was an apartment of four rooms and rather extravagantly furnished—furnished in a manner that indicated that the lady was not at all embarrassed by lack of funds. Chinese rugs, a peacock lamp, a kidney desk, Circassian furniture, expensive odds and ends, everything of the most costly—as I quite well know, since I went over it all with care, prying into drawers and chests, treating no privacy with respect, while she in a weeping rage sat on a divan and promised me all sorts of retribution.

The maid, a pretty little French girl, had not shown the surprize that one might have expected to see in the eyes of a maid when the mistress comes home accompanied by a strange man; but Marie's petite body quivered in fear and her wide innocent eyes widened, too, when I bruskly told her to sit by her mistress and keep quiet.

I SUPPOSE that many people will think that I was taking a big risk as well as acting with a certain impudence. But on reflection they may perceive that I had undeniable reasons for knowing that this woman was involved in crime. So my risk was purely personal and not legal. She was, I knew, in some way connected with the mysterious person I was trying to reach—that I would reach.

And for me to have appealed to the police would have been folly; the Unknown had showed himself at all times superior to them in wit. I knew that I could get nothing definite out of her by direct questioning. She could draw behind the impregnable sentence "I don't know" and leave me with no alternative but torture to make her talk—then perhaps have lied. Besides, I never lay my fingers on any one by way of torture.

The only thing feasible was to search her apartment, and I found little for my pains. No letters, no telegrams, no note-books, nothing of the kind.

I did find, however, a little, elegantly bound book of French stories, and, because I have a love of fine bindings and a fair knowledge of French, I picked this off the night table beside her bed and paused a minute to inspect it. On opening the cover, I saw: "To Felise from——" somebody or other who had written his signature in that eccentric, illegible way that young men have when wishing to convey the impression that they are artistic.

"This is your book?" I asked.

"Whose did you think it was?" she snapped.

"Felise" was associated in my mind with but one person.

"Really, Miss Dobell," I ventured, "you——"

But there was no need to go further.

The woman jumped up with a scream and dashed for the door; I made a bound at her,

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and Marie scooted in the other direction. I flung Miss Dobell to the bed and plunged after the scurrying maid, whose mouth opened for a shrill scream as I caught her. I clapped my hand over that emerging scream with a severity that the little wretch resented by bringing her sharp dainty teeth together in the flesh of my palm.

I pried a thumb under her jaw and painfully forced her to give up the attempt to eat me alive and, dragging rather than carrying her, hastened back to Miss Dobell, who was making another break for the door. I dropped Marie so quickly and completely that she was still sprawled on the floor when I again flung Miss Dobell to the bed and, picking up the struggling maid, planted her beside the mistress.

It was hot work, and I was puffing a little. The women looked as if they had been in a cat-and-dog fight. It is seldom that I have seen two women so furious or been myself in a predicament that I felt so incompetent to handle. But I took the straightest way out. I told Miss Dobell that another move on her part and I would drag her and her maid off to jail and call the Federal officers—who had a special interest in her since the murder of Gowan MacFarland.

Her desire to escape had been inspired solely by the knowledge that I had identified her as the woman the Federal officers wanted. She quieted down but remained stubbornly silent. I tried questioning her again. It was of no use. She was evidently more afraid of the Unknown than of me or of the Federal authorities.

The tussle and scrambling and screaming had carried beyond the walls.

"What's the matter here?" demanded the irritated voice of the superintendent of the apartments.

"My friend," said I throwing open the door so that the woman could see for herself and come in if she wished, "has just received news of her brother's death and is quite hysterical. I am Dr. Robertson."

The woman came in, but Miss Dobell, with visions of the Federal authorities before her, did not contradict me. And both she and the maid might easily have been mistaken by any one for women in sorrow.

I do not think that the woman, a sort of exalted landlady, doubted me in the least. But she had her share of that curiosity prevalent in the world to look upon people marked by tragedy, and in she came. It was well that I had foresightedly evaded mentioning Felise Dobell by name, for the landlady immediately addressed her as "Miss Dorel," and Felise soon found herself padding out my story and conniving with me in hoodwinking the visitor.

It was a situation not without a tincture of amusement in it: we had joined wits against a common intruder, and it was not difficult to carry the story into credibility. Even Marie shed a few further tears over memory of the "dear brother she loved as her own."

I gathered in the course of their brief conversation that Felise had some years before had rooms there and only recently returned to the quiet and respectability of the place.

Then the landlady, with many expressions of sympathy, withdrew herself to the door, and I closed it again and faced the women.

In this world I have had my share of luck. I have had it in all forms, pleasant and unpleasant; but one reason that I have so much of the kind called "good" is because I keep a sharp lookout for every advantage. I have long made a practise of noticing things, particularly the little, almost imperceptible things that people do and the more obvious ones that they say. By taking a shot from the "Felise" I found in the book to the "Dobell" that had appeared in Gowan MacFarland's death-letter, I had luckily uncovered an identity of this woman's, and I no sooner heard the name "Dorel" than I prepared another question of importance.

"Let me see," I remarked. "Is Felix a brother, cousin—or husband?"

She stared at me for some time, then asked falteringly:

"What do you mean?"

"Felix Dorel—is he a brother or what?"

"Felix Dorel?" She pronounced the name in a mystified sort of way, as does one who hears for the first time a name he thinks he should know.

"Yes. Felix Dorel."

That was indeed his real name. He had as many aliases as a cat is said to have lives, and had gone to prison under the name of Shaylor. That was a name to excite the police at any time. In fact, about the only name of his—so far as I knew—with which

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the police were unfamiliar was that of Dorel.

"Who are you—a detective?" she asked, evidently forgetting how little my conduct had been like that of a man with the law at his elbow.

"I am not a detective. But I believe that I have less cause to be afraid of the law than you have. Shall we put our respective fears to a test?"

She was a rather frayed-looking beauty at that moment and was no doubt even more aware of it than myself, for I have never found any woman to be unconscious of her personal appearance—widows even going so far as to consult the mirror to see how black suits them before setting out for the cemetery. As she awaited some further comment from me—apparently not understanding what I had meant—her fingers busily felt of her hair and adjusted her waist and skirt. Marie sat watching first me and then her mistress. The pretty little maid did not appear to understand what it was all about, and she did not seem greatly to care. Her loyalty was plainly fastened to Miss Dobell.

I explained that, if the subsequent conversation did not suit me, I would call in the police so that she and I could complain against each other and tell our respective stories to the sergeants and the judges.

Then I asked further of Felix Dorel.

She insisted that she knew nothing.

Perhaps she didn't. I was unconvinced, and I thought perhaps we should come to that matter again.

I brought the interrogating around to Vivian again. But Miss Dobell was more deeply entrenched in ignorance than ever.

She began to feel that she was secure. I began to feel pretty much the same. I was strongly tempted to appeal to the police. They, I understand, have no scruples against using severe methods to make even women talk. But I knew that things would have to go much harder for me than they were going before I appealed to the police. It is very baffling to face stubborn silence—in a woman. There is also something unnatural about it. I was debating on whether or not I cared to burden myself with Miss Dobell and her maid—kidnap them until Miss Dobell recovered from such an attack of ignorance. I had done things of that kind before. They are embarrassing. One's patience often wears out before a woman's stubbornness.

Then the telephone rang.

I told Marie to say that her mistress could not come to the phone, and then she could deliver the message to both of us.

The message received over the phone was brief. Marie took the receiver down, answered, paused and hung up. She looked understandingly at Miss Dobell and said something rapidly in French—just a sentence.

I told her to speak English.

The quick-witted girl did not hesitate, but at once began pouring out to me the statement that Miss Dobell's father and an attorney were coming at once to see her. They were on their way.

"In which case I had better leave," I said.

Miss Dobell showed a remarkable interest in having me get away. Which would seem rather strange—since help was coming to her!

"But I wish to take the earrings with me," I said; "also, an account of how you came by them."

She readily handed them over to me. She said "that woman"—meaning Vivian—had given them to her on condition that she would have a personal put in the papers, and that this had been done.

I wasn't sure she lied about that. I am now. I searched the papers for weeks and weeks back and found no trace of such a personal. But then I accepted the story tentatively. However, I should have been more skeptical of her ever having done that favor, since it was apparent that for some reason or other she intensely disliked Vivian.

Miss Dobell seemed determined that we should part friends. She volunteered to make every effort to find out where Vivian—"that woman"—was and let me know.

"Give me your address—and go. It's dangerous for you to remain. Give me your address. I'll find out for you. I'm not angry. I understand."

What it was she understood, I do not know.

I simple-mindedly gave an address. I am not sure, but I think it was the address of a vacant lot out in some new suburban addition.

Possibly I could have learned something more if I had stayed, but I was in a hurry to

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leave. The situation was critical. However, I was not in too great a hurry to leave without apologizing for so ungallant a conduct and expressing the hope that we would meet again soon.

She assured me that we would. I rather believed her, too.

I went because I had not lived with Vivian so many years and remained unfamiliar with French. And the message that the maid had thrown at Miss Dobell in rapid-fire speech was:

"The striped bandit has just been released. You meet him tonight."

IX

NOW it happened, because I had arranged for it to happen, that, when Snips left the office of Waller, Waller & Ishman, he put the typewritten note of instructions, which Ishman had transmitted to him from the Unknown, in an outside coat pocket, right side. And, before he had gone three blocks, this was neatly extracted by one of Joe Connolly's bright boys.

Incidentally I may remark that Snips had had what he later told me was a "cur'ous" experience with Ishman during the few minutes that he had been in the office of the great lawyer. Perhaps Ishman had been relieved that instructions from the Unknown had coincided with his own inclinations. So braving the district attorney's suspicions and opposition, he had effected the release. Not without difficulty, though. There was much money spent, much pulling from below and pressure from above. The powerful Unknown, it seemed, had put on the screws in some high places to get that lone little gutter-rat out of his cell.

Ishman had looked Snips over carefully.

"May I have my papers?" he had asked.

Snips said nothing. He knew of no papers. The fellow seemed crazy.

Ishman was respectful. He insisted, however. He explained. Snips tried to look wise. But he knew nothing; he said nothing.

Ishman was one of the keenest minded men in the world; that is, in certain respects his brain was the keenest. And he was quick to be convinced that Snips was not the striped bandit, certainly not the one that had called on him at his home.

In a moment of irritation he told Snips that. Snips laughed—but said nothing. Snips thought it a good joke. He knew that he was not the striped bandit. He didn't know who the bandit was. He didn't care. He was on a lark.

Snips put the typewritten instructions in his pocket and went out. He expected the paper to be stolen, but he did not show any recognition of the boy who removed it, even if he saw him. Whoever may have been following Snips to make sure that he communicated with no one could not have thought that Snips connived at the purloining, even if the spotter detected it himself—which was unlikely.

The note was no sooner in possession of the youthful pickpocket than it was relayed swiftly to my apartment. And there I found it.

Which shows why I was as eager to leave Miss Dobell as she was to have me go. I knew the note would be there.

The note, which Yang handed to me as I came in, instructed Snips to go to a cheap fourth-class hotel about three blocks from the Hole, where a room was already provided, to wait until ten o'clock, then make use of a rope-ladder concealed under the mattress and—as a precaution against the police, who might be shadowing him—to slip out of the window and into the alley, turn north, go two blocks and enter a limousine that would be waiting there. To speak to no one and to answer no questions or ask them was also a part of the instructions.

Evidently the Unknown, who was so considerate toward captured crooks, expected that the police would endeavor to keep an eye on the striped bandit. There had been an unusual amount of trouble about getting him admitted to bail. It was pretty well-known at the time that some other influence than Ishman's arguments had been brought to bear on the magistrate. Anyway, he had been admitted to a cash bail. There was a scandalous roar in the papers.

At ten o'clock the limousine drew up. No one was inside. The chauffeur sat on the seat, apparently indifferent to time and tide. It was dark in the alley and not light in the street, but, when the chauffeur lighted a cigaret, I caught a glimpse of the face.

I ran out of the alley and without a word opened the door and sprang inside. Also,

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without a word from the chauffeur, the machine started off.

We were scarcely out of sight before another machine, with Jerry at the wheel, drove up to wait for Snips.

I made that precaution unknown to Snips. I told him to follow instructions; so I knew that he would come to look for the machine —and be whisked away to my apartment. I wanted to take good care of him, for I expected that there might be a dozen cutthroats at his neck if my plans failed and the Unknown suspected that Snips had given away the instructions.

We drove for less than a half mile, turning and twisting with the intention perhaps of throwing me off the direction; and in this the driver was successful. When the machine suddenly wheeled into an alley and drew up so close to the wall that it seemed there would not be room enough to open the limousine door, I did not at all know where I was. Nor was there any time permitted to look around—if time would have done any good in that black hole of a place.

There was no time for anything more than a glance, which, as I have said, was not of much value as the alley was dark. But the general atmosphere of the place, particularly of the odors, disclosed sufficiently impressively that it was a very vile neighborhood.

The driver dismounted and knocked against the wall. Then, strangely enough, a door opened out of the wall. Without hesitation I quickly left the limousine and entered; but, as I went in, I caught a flash of amazement on the face of the driver, who was within radius of the machine lights.

The driver was Felise Dobell, neatly togged out in a chauffeur's rig.

Her surprize was not because she recognized me. No. I wore a tall silk hat, the striped coat and the white silk mask, having had plenty of time to put them on as we drove. That was why she was surprized.

The door closed behind me with a sullen, ominous click that indicated an automatic lock.

I was alone in utter darkness.

I don't know how long I stood in silence, but I know that silent, motionless, I did stand. I had at once the idea that I was being tried out, that my nerve was being tested.

I am afraid, perhaps, of many things, but the dark is not one of them. Moreover, I was not unarmed, and in the matter of exchanging shots I have no reason to feel nervous, no matter who the other person may be. If this sounds much like boasting, I can only reply that, more times than not, I can hit a small coin flipped in the air at ten paces. The hours on hours for year after year that I have put in at practise with automatics must, of course, have given me a skill that is not to be acquired by less persistence.

The room was sepulchrally dark and silent.

Then a quiet, heavy, firm voice spoke from somewhere at the other side.

Naturally my attention was concentrated on the voice. It was all that I had to judge the man by, and I believed that I stood in the presence of the mysterious Unknown, the man of power and cunning.

I SHOULD not have been surprized if the voice had been Gaboreau's. If so, I should have recognized it at the first syllable. His harsh, insistent tone was unmistakable—at least to my ears. I rather expected that it would be Felix Dorel's, though I did not see from where Dorel could have got either the brains or the wealth to have conducted a crime campaign as this Unknown was doing. Dorel had the cruelty and the cunning—but brains, no.

However, there was something about that voice that tugged at my memory. My first impression was that I knew that voice, that I had heard it before, but this quickly disappeared—as a dream eludes the waking grasp—and try as I did, I could not recover that impression, though I tormented my inner ear by trying to connect that heavy, strong, calm, voice with some one I had heard, some place, some time, before.

"With many obstacles to overcome, I have called you here—to me. I have worked for you. I have saved you from punishment. You—you are the striped bandit?"

The question came perfunctorily, not doubtfully at all.

I answered briefly that I was; nor did I forget to keep the end of my tongue pressed against my teeth.

"Why did you come here?"

Another question that seemed asked as

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only a matter of form, as questions are asked in a ritual or an initiation.

"I followed the instructions handed to me by the lawyer."

"Yes, yes. You are the striped bandit," he said. I could imagine that he was smiling. "I recognize you even in the dark. You may not be aware of the fact, but we have met before."

That would seem to account for my feeling of having heard the voice before. I could not place him. I had met many people lately—as the striped bandit.

"But there is one thing I don't understand. I believe there has been some comment and skepticism about it, too. How could you, a slum-born youth, carry your part so well? Remember, I have met you. I have met artistocratic gentlemen, too. You are a good actor."

"I planned it all out." And, lying freely, I went on to say, "When I decided to take up that work, I got into swell hotels. Worked. Bus boy. And studied real gents."

"But your thick tongue? That isn't natural. I've had inquiries made about you."

I laughed. This man was thorough. I laughed not out of amusement but as if I admired his perception.

"I knew," I said slowly, thickly, my tongue hard against my teeth, "that I would give myself away if I talked naturally. So, to make myself talk slowly, carefully and hide the slums, I talk with my tongue pressed against my teeth—lower teeth."

"Clever!" he said admiringly.

Then, in the patois of the slums, I prattled a few sentences, explaining how I had studied it all out.

"But that conspicuous disguise?" he asked.

"De cops wuz al'us lookin' fer it. See? C'rry me coat on me arm, an' dey never tink o' me."

"The wooden guns—you would not shoot anybody?"

"——, yes! But see, a dummy gat's good as a loaded smoke-wagon an' lets youse down easy when de jedge squints atchu. I dopes it all out."

"Brilliant. I can and will make your fortune, my boy. I have brought you here to tell you that. You have a powerful friend in me. We may not meet again, but I want you to remember that you have me for a friend. I'll watch over you—help you—as long as you are all right. And, to show you that mine are not idle words, when I leave, you will find a little package here on the table to meet your present expenses. You combine brains and cunning."

Again putting my tongue to my teeth:

"What is your game? I don't like to work blind——"

"What's that?"

"I'll do any work, but I don't want to work blind. The police can't catch me twice. I'll make good money working alone."

"You try to work alone, and I'll have you killed. You're not fooling with Burgess and the stupid police when you run counter to me!"

There was driving power in that voice: a voice that could dominate councils.

"That's all right. But what is the big idea? I'll take chances, but I don't work without a light."

"Without a what?"

"A light—something that shows where I am going—what I am doing."

"You won't do as I direct?"

The question he asked was a threat.

"It depends. I have to know something of the 'why'."

It was an effort for me to talk slowly, for me to keep my tongue in the proper place. I was after information and not ready to throw off disguises. Too, the room was dark, black. I didn't know its arrangement or how many people might be in it.

"You tell me that!"

"I didn't beg you to bring me here," I answered with an appearance of anger. "I came to thank you—not to be your butler or something."

A few seconds of silence, tense seconds. My fingers in each of the side pockets were closed on automatics. I did not know what to expect.

"The idea is so big I doubt if you can grasp it."

He was explaining! He went on. He was not working for himself. No. But did I realize what the Government was doing? No. Did I have any conception of what was coming after the war? No. Did I realize that there was a strong movement in Congress to do away with all police departments?

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I remarked that that would be fine.

He laughed cynically.

And enlarge the Secret Service and substitute that for the police? I knew the Secret Service, didn't I? I knew what men they were. Give them police powers in every town and city—where would the crooks, be? Wiped out in a day. Most of them. Different from the grafting, bribe-taking police. Did I realize that?

Well, law was organized and was going to be better organized. Federalization of the police authority would put an end to crime, or to most of it. To professional crooks, anyway. What remained? Crooks should organize. That was his great idea. He was doing it.

"You are a crook?" I asked.

He laughed. This time there was something like amusement in the laugh.

"Yes. The biggest in the world, they say."

It happened that, crime being one of my specialties—or rather special interests—I was familiar with the names of most of the famous crooks, and for a moment I wondered which of them he could be. His nation-wide plan was not feasible, but it was dangerous. Like another Cataline, he was urging lawlessness to bestride the land, a greater, wealthier land than Rome had been when that spoiled darling of fortune had sought for political reasons to let the criminals of his day color the muddy Tiber with blood.

BUT at a second flash of thought I realized that he could not be any of the criminals of whom I knew. This man had power and wealth. They—queer, brilliant, misguided devils—had no power but cunning, no wealth but loot. Either was too small for the magnitude of this fellow's operation. It took not only a ruthless man, but one far-visioned, to plot the assassination of congressmen and senators who were disposed to federalize the police. Crooks seldom see so far; if they do, they are indifferent to the future. They do not look out for the other fellow, their hypothetical brother in crime.

I knew for a fact that many attempts had been made to organize crime on a large scale; but the organization had never gone further than "gangs." Gaboreau had once had a large one. I did not believe that crime could ever be national and ubiquitous. I had often thought it over. It could not be; for crime is essentially anarchy, lawlessness, and a crime organization falls apart of its own weight once it outgrows the dimensions of a gang dominated by a personality rather than—as society, as law is dominated—by an idea and an ideal.

But this man—the voice, as well as the words, were impressive—impressed me not as a fool or a dreamer but as a hard, far-seeing, practical man.

I wondered what he was really after, what was actually back of his schemes. On the surface he had told the truth. He was organizing crime. But he was picking his criminals out of jail. "The biggest criminal in the world," as he said he was called, would not have needed to break into cells for recruits.

Personally, the federalization of the police appealed to me. With the police of all cities, towns and hamlets under one central authority, the country would be much better off. Consider how a handful of Secret Service men, operating for a time with the police, had cleaned the country of German spies, brainier, more cunning, better equipped and financed, than crooks ever were or could be.

But what could this man be after? He spoke of events to follow the war. He was not working in the interests of Wilhelmstrasse. Not even a German would have dared to try to organize crooks to create disturbance internally for the benefit of a foreign enemy.

Far-visioned, deeply penetrating, he had seen something coming after the war and was ruthlessly preparing to meet it for his own interest. But why select crooks as agents?

In so many words, I asked:

"What is behind all that? The organization of crime?"

Silence. Ominous silence. My probe seemed to have hit a sensitive spot.

"You are very inquiring for a gutter-rat," he said, and his words were suspicious, as if he felt that in some incomprehensible way he had been deceived—if not detected.

As he finished speaking, there was the click of a button, and light appeared in the room.

I confronted a man whose face was masked and whose entire body was covered with a long black cloak.

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There we were. Two enemies, each masked, unidentified, unidentifiable.

He must have been surprized to see me as well-hidden from view as himself.

"Take off that mask!" he thundered with furious authority.

"After you, sir."

I spoke coldly, naturally. I was in earnest, ready to let the disguise fall.

A pause. His eyes glittered at the little holes in his black mask.

"Fool!" was his one word, and his hand flashed toward the button in the wall at his side.

I shot from both guns as the light went out. He had been standing before an open door, and there followed the choking cry of an oath, the bumping of a body as if he was drunkenly lurching against the wall. Then a gun from the passageway beyond the door blazed at me. I answered. A confusion of voices and movement. I stood alert, expecting to be rushed.

Then the snap of a door closing.

I had not killed him—and he was gone.

I threw the blaze of an electric torch across the room, pressed the button and tried the door. It was heavy and held fast. An ordinary lock will give way if a gun is fired into it, but there was no lock visible. It was fastened from the other side. It opened out. Both doors in the dungeon-like room opened out. The hinges were outside; there was no knocking them off. It was unusual for a door to open out. There was no window, no other exit than those two heavily locked doors.

I was caught a prisoner as much as if I were in a cell.

The room was bare; not a piece of furniture was in it, excepting a little rickety table on which was a small, oblong package. It was a room near fifteen by fifteen. I put my hand to the sill of the alley door and felt a faint blow of air. There was no danger of suffocation—anyway, I could have shot holes in the door in an extreme need of air. But that would arouse the neighborhood, bring the police. I could wait.

I took the package from the table and tore it open.

There were ten thousand dollars in bills. He had said he would make my fortune. He was generous. I felt entitled to that money. I needed it, too.

I distributed the money in my pockets, turned out the light and, seating myself in a corner, prepared to await whatever was to come.

X

I SOON found that I had a much longer wait than I wanted on my hands.

The night passed and next day, and the next night was well gone when my watch, which I had forgotten to wind, ran down.

I began to wonder if I had been left there in the hope that I would starve.

I was chilled, thirsty and hungry.

By shooting through the door I could attract attention from the alley, but that was to be only a last desperate resort. I should have to answer questions of the curious, if not of the police, and my real identity would certainly be revealed to the organizer of crime. He undoubtedly had spies watching. He had been exceedingly lucky to escape with his life—if indeed he had escaped with it. I seldom miss.

But in thinking the matter over—I had plenty of time for searching thought—I decided that the crime-organizer's men were awaiting developments. They were perhaps fearful that I had had friends watching and so would make no move until they had been reassured.

Nor did they know that I was alive. I had been shot at. Perhaps the bullet had reached me and been fatal later. Perhaps I had bled to death. I took pains to be sure that they could not tell by listening. I was quiet and moved scarcely at all. Only enough to ease aching muscles, though it was chilly and I wished for exercise. I was determined to have greater patience than they. I knew that they would come back some time. Curiosity would bring them if nothing else. They would want to know the identity of the striped bandit, anyway, no matter if he were dead.

Through the day and much of the night I could hear people in the alley—the shrill gamins at play, women chattering, the rattle of vehicles, milk cans and garbage wagons. I really had relief within call of my voice when I chose to summon it, but I should have to give up my personal secrecy. I could not think of a disarming explanation of my situation. The police might even search my apartment and find the loot of the "striped bandit." They

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might search my person and find the mask and hat, perhaps uncover the striped lining of my coat. It was better to remain hungry and chilled and wait.

I know the wisdom of playing a waiting game. I have learned that wisdom from experiences often impressively humiliating.

I dozed, but only restlessly. I never was, at any time, a sound sleeper—not even when exhausted. Besides, the floor was uncomfortable; the corner in which I propped myself a poor substitute for a bed. And I am particular about beds. I seldom sleep if forced to occupy a strange one. My own mattress was specially made, and I slept very lightly on it even when there was nothing disturbing to think about.

The hours dragged themselves by. Of course I was impatient, as impatient as any one would have been in a like situation; but I did not let that impatience make me nervous, restless. I had reasoned until I realized that sooner or later somebody would return to see what had become of me. I would wait for that somebody. But the longer I waited the more I became like—well, like some animal growing more and more desperate in watching for something at which to spring.

It was far into the second night, and the oppressive quietude of silence in the midst of city weighed on me. There had long been no one passing in the alley. Not a word or sound of any kind. I was cold, miserable, silent as a coiled serpent and furious.

Suddenly there came a soft rapping at the inner door—the one through which the Unknown had disappeared. A soft rapping, but distinct. It was as if some one was rapping not so much to demand entrance as to see if I were awake. Such consideration for my repose could not pass unappreciated. I pretended not to have heard. I made no answer, but slowly, noiselessly, I got to my feet. Again the gentle rapping, but I was not tempted into answering.

I felt rather than heard—and, of course, could not see—the door open.

A moist draft of air swept in upon me, and the faint whisper—

"Bet he's scared himself to death."

"Guess he was croaked," came the whispered answer. "Not a sound since."

"If he ain't dead now, he soon 'll be," said a whisper, almost voiceless.

I remembered how MacFarland had been coldly murdered; how others, congressmen, senators, had been cut down; how the Unknown had spoken of murdering me if I did not follow orders. They had come thinking I was asleep or dead—had come to make sure of the latter.

"Turn on the light, Jack. An' we've got 'im."

The light came on—and I shot from either hand, both guns together. No aiming in the dark this time.

A blur of evil faces strained with surprize and horror, a glint of knives falling from hands twisted up in fright and pain, as both men were jerked backward by the blow of the bullets.

I did not pause but leaped for the door. A third form, as a shadow flies, streaked from the passageway, but not so swift as the bullet that went after him. He stumbled forward and dropped—dead.

It isn't often that the cold fury, the suppressed, volcanic rage, of the "killer" gets hold of me. Anyway, I was exterminating vermin.

I did not stop. Who those men were I did not care. They were only hireling killers. And I was in haste. Though I had fired before in that room without attracting attention, there was no way of telling what this later fusillade might arouse.

The opera hat was pressed flat and stowed against my breast. The striped lining of the coat had been turned inward again, and I wore a soft felt hat. The ring had been removed from my little finger. Nothing visible of the striped bandit remained. But questions asked would be unpleasant and a search—I would simply have to resist.

Through the long passageway I ran, turned up the street and fell into a fast walk. Almost at once a policeman came running from across the street toward me.

"Thought I heard a shot," he said, eyeing me suspiciously.

He had heard only the last I fired, somewhat nearer than the others to the street entrance.

"I was just around the corner and thought so, too," I explained. "Ran this way. Auto passed me—driving fast. Must have been a blowout."

"Haven't seen any machines," he said flatly as if challenging me to deny it.

I was getting in deeper. He was polite,

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but I could detect an increasing determination not to let me get away without an investigation.

"I did. It didn't come down this street," I explained, "but along there." I indicated the cross street. "Didn't think of the blow-out till I rounded the corner. But I did notice the car number—it was driving fast, too. I caught it under the arc there. Number 86643."

"The devil!" he cried excitedly, hurriedly looking about him as if for help. "I've been after that car for a month—it's been reported a dozen times for speeding in this district!"

"Haven't you tracked the owner?"

"Yes; but this is a big closed car. The number was issued to a laundry company. They still use it. That's one reason we're particularly anxious to catch it. Which way did it go?"

I explained again. That is, I told him what I thought he wanted to know. And in his interest, if not excitement, he forgot to question me further about my right to be in that street at 3 A.M.

I moved away.

TO BOLSTER up my imaginative story, I had given him, right off, the number of the car in which Miss Dobell had driven me to keep the appointment with the Unknown. And from the policeman I had also learned something: that it would be no use my trying to find out who owned the car number 86643, at least by finding out the number. But I had not been in such haste as to fail to get the number of the premises from which I emerged, and later I got the street. I might find out who owned that property, who leased it and who subleased it. I tried that source of investigation later, but learned nothing of value.

I knew very well that Miss Dobell would have changed her apartment again; and, as she was the only direct connection I had had with the Unknown, I was hard put to pick up threads that would lead me to him. But I was sure that she would not have hid from Mr. Henry Macree even to avoid my attentions. Henry Macree was the heir and nephew of Conrad Hearn. Miss Dobell could not remain unimpressed by that. I should arrange at once to get acquainted with Macree. Conrad Hearn had shown a disposition to be friendly with me, even inviting me to his home. I would now repeat the invitation to myself and accept.

But in the meantime, as I was thinking these matters over, I walked rapidly and prayed in vain for a taxi. But I found an all-night and not wholly shabby restaurant. I went in to telephone Jerry and stayed to eat. When I began, I really did not feel hungry, but presently I wondered a bit anxiously if there could be enough soft-boiled—fresh—eggs in the place to satisfy me. There may not have been enough genuinely fresh eggs, and the coffee was bitter—but it was hot.

No doubt Jerry was coming as fast as he could and endangering himself and belated night-walkers. But it took him a long time. Waiting is one of the things that I can do gracefully. I simply sit still and let time go by. If there is any worrying to be done, somebody else has to do it.

But before Jerry arrived, two men came in. Detectives. One of them was Mr. Perkins. I did not care to see him. Of all the people in the city, perhaps I cared less about meeting him than any other. No such sentiments were entertained by Mr. Perkins.

I saw them and recognized them as detectives before Mr. Perkins recognized me. But it was too late to get out peaceably. Perhaps the men who had sneaked in to cut my throat had been found and the law-hawks were abroad looking for somebody of just my description. As a matter of fact they were.

It was a lonely hour, a deserted street outside and in an obscure restaurant. I did what any one would have done in my situation—probably. I tried to conceal my face in a coffee cup.

One of the detectives tapped me on the shoulder and asked abruptly—

"Who are you?"

I set the cup down and wiped my lips with the napkin before turning around. It was unpleasant. One of the detectives was on each side of me. I could feel rather than see that Mr. Perkins had identified me and was grasping the handle of a gun to make sure I would not evade him again. In another two seconds he would have the gun out. In another ten I would be disarmed. In thirty more, searched and my identity associated with that of the striped bandit. I was in a tight place.

I was sitting on a stool at a high counter.

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Across from me was the waiter with his mouth agape. I don't know why it is that people always open their mouths when they see officers making an arrest.

Each detective had one hand on a shoulder of mine.

It was embarrassing.

I don't know that I "thought" anything. I simply acted.

"Shut your mouth!" I shouted angrily at the waiter.

It was an unexpected and surprizing thing to say, and both detectives glanced instinctively at the man behind the counter.

On the instant I threw myself backward off the stool, breaking from the hands on my shoulder and hitting the floor with a thump. In fact I gave my head a pretty hard crack.

But, as I went down, I pulled a gun and I used it. Perkins wheeled toward me with his gun half drawn as I fell. My bullet shattered his shoulder, and the impact of the blow jerked him slightly to one side. The other detective, not waiting to draw, lunged down at me. He fell all spraddled out, aiming to throw himself across me and pin me down, but he landed on the sharp point of an updrawn knee that caught him somewhere around the pit of the stomach.

That took a good deal of the fight out of him, and I extracted the rest by bringing down the muzzle of the automatic against his skull. I knew that he would be quiet for some time. Then, as a cat scrambles off its back, I had half risen to meet the oncoming Mr. Perkins. His right arm was helpless, and he had not stopped to try to get the gun into his left hand. He was clinching. I had underestimated the man. He was a good fighter and clear grit. That is the trouble with the police: they hide so often their real, manly, heroic qualities under an irritating, bullying manner.

I felt a flash of admiration for him as he came. If my arm had been broken, I would not have rushed a man with a gun. I don't think I would have rushed a man with a gun out, anyway. But it was no time to be admiring or merciful. I shied to one side and tripped him, rose, told the nearly paralyzed waiter to lift his arms and keep them lifted, then pounced at the gun which Perkins had dropped.

"—— you! I'll get you yet!" he growled defiantly from the floor.

"No," I told him, with a backward glance to see if the waiter still had his hands where they belonged. "We're going to be friends. I didn't think you had it in you."

"Had what?"

"A royal flush for the show-down."

Perhaps his brain was not entirely clear. Perhaps he did not play poker. Certainly the puzzled, angry look on his face indicated that he had not understood.

And I thought Jerry would never come. Perhaps he had got the address wrong. I was apprehensive lest somebody else come in the meantime.

I removed the gun from the other detective, who was beginning to stir.

"Lie still," I told Perkins. "Stand still," I told the waiter.

I was thinking about withdrawing from the restaurant myself and making my way home as best I could when through the glass I saw a machine flash up at the curb.

I went to the door. It was Jerry.

I told him to stay outside. It was just as well for the detective to remain ignorant of what he looked like.

Then I did something to rather soothe my regrets. Perkins, personally, I detested. That is, he had a personality of the kind that I can not endure. But he had clear nerve.

I emptied one of my pockets of the bills the Unknown had left on the table at a moment when he was disposed to make my fortune, and I tried to explain to Perkins that—as far as I was concerned—it was clean money. I assured him that he had made a mistake in thinking that he wanted me. But then I knew there was no use trying to convince him. However, I left the money to help ease the broken shoulder.

Then I broke both guns taken from the detectives, scattered the shells and ran to the throbbing machine—and away we went. And Perkins' voice followed me from the sidewalk, to where he had run, and cursed me, and told me that I could not buy him.

We reached home unmolested.

Yang, as usual, met me at the door, bowed deeply, then led the way and pointed to a divan where Snips, grotesquely sprawled with his mouth agape, was asleep.

I was soon in bed and asleep, too.

TO BE CONCLUDED

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A WORD from Louis Dodge concerning his story in this issue. There is no "if" as to whether any of our Camp-Fire comrades have served in the Philippines and pretty surely his letter will put Mr. Dodge into touch with some of his old bunkies.

St. Louis, Mo.

The story, "A Fight to a Finish," is mainly true. The soldier called *Flynn* (this was not his real name) belonged to either the 18th or 23rd U. S. Infantry. I belonged to both regiments at different times back in the Spanish-American days. *Flynn* was actually driven to bay under a bridge, just as the story relates. And he was rescued by something like a miracle, combined with his own pluck and persistence, from a small band of natives. It was down in the Sulu group of islands, where the natives are Mohammedans. I have added a few "trimmings" to the story for the sake of proportion.

IT MAY be that there are among those who gather round the Camp-Fire some who served in the American army in the Phillipines around about 1899 or 1900. If so, any from the 18th or 23rd are likely to recall the story of *Flynn*.

I was in Manila in 1898; in Iloilo in '99; in Sulu, Siassi and Bongao in '99 and 1900. I'd like much to hear from others of those times and places who remember me.

We didn't do a great deal of fighting, but I think we constituted a "Watch on the Rhine" far more sinister and strange than anything the boys are facing in Europe today, now that the fighting is over. The weird silence of the little islands, the loneliness, the sense of being in a lost world—these constituted a situation altogether unique.—LOUIS DODGE.

FROM S. B. H. Hurst of our writers' brigade comes another answer to "What is the spirit of adventure, biologically considered?" I give only part of it and so do not do justice to Mr. Hurst's argument. Personally, though I do not agree with him, I think the world would be better off if it frankly discussed sex like any other fact of life, instead of leaving it to work its way half unseen, less than half understood and with the lure and mystery of attempted secrecy. But even those of you who feel as I do will agree that, popular attitude being what it is, our Camp-Fire is not the place for full and frank discussion of the subject, no matter how sane and decent the discussion may be.

So I merely present the outline of Mr. Hurst's main point, as a theory that deserves place among the others advanced. And I give warning that no other letters on this theory will reach Camp-Fire.

Seattle, Wash.

By the way, the answer to your repeated query in the magazine—what is the *spirit of adventure*, considered biologically—may appear unpleasant to many minds. Because, of course, sex is the answer. Adventure is such because it stirs up a greater amount of emotion than the ordinary. Probably the earliest form of adventure, except the mere hunting for food, was the cave man taking his club to take away from his rival the woman he wanted—the gratification of the sex instinct being the motive, as, indeed, it was in most of the hunting. The quests set upon knights had always some woman's scarf about them, and even the Holy Grail was in line—as a negation of sex, thus proving the theory. But you can very easily furnish illustrations for yourself.

Probably you will not like this answer. Unfortunately science is against you. You can not avoid your subconscious inheritance. But there are those who will say this is a nasty subject. So is embryology.—S. B. H. HURST.

FOLLOWING Camp-Fire custom, William David Ball, on the occasion of his first story in our magazine, rises and introduces himself:

Los Angeles, Calif.

All my life I've been waiting for a chance to blow my own horn. Now that you have invited me to tell something of myself, I find the blowing difficult. I'd like to flavor this letter with the glamour of far places, weave a thread of romance into it that should leave you marveling at what a really wonderful fellow I am. But when I glance over the list of bare facts in my life, my conceit goes out like a candle doused with a wet gunny-sack.

I WAS born in Denver, Colorado, where I grew up like most other boys—playing hookey occasionally, reading of my favorite heroes (Diamond Dick and Jesse James) behind my geography, and dreaming of the time when I should adventure into the blue, cloud-kissed ranges of the Rockies rising to the west. When I had finished my schooling, at twenty-four, I left Denver. (I must not lose the opportunity here of bragging about my two

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degrees, lying tucked away somewhere in a trunk. I never mention them to my relatives, but to you, who do not know me so well, I may speak of them with pardonable pride.)

THROUGH Wyoming and Utah I went, landing finally in the sagebrush country of Idaho. For a year I worked on ranches along the Salmon Creek, saving my wages like a good fellow. South of the Snake River and nestled close to the hills that divide Nevada and Idaho, there was a Mormon settlement called Oakley. Oakley for twenty years had grown and prospered, a little world in itself, sixty miles from a railroad. I rented a ranch close to Oakley, with the firm purpose of making my fortune.

Things happened to me on that ranch, and they've kept right on happening ever since. I made my way back to Colorado without my fortune. I worked as a bookkeeper, I handled paper routes, I spun strings for musical instruments, I taught school. Finally, I drifted back to the sagebrush, where for six years I held down a desert farm under a worthless irrigation project. Just now, I'm running the "Flu" ambulance for the city of Los Angeles, interrupting for a while my chosen profession of writing short stories.

THE story, "The Affairs of Men," was suggested to me by an incident I witnessed in a cow-camp near the White River district of Routt County, Colorado, before the Moffat Railroad went through.

A cow-puncher rode up to the Silver Dollar Saloon, dismounted, and began looping the reins around the hitching-rail. The saloon door opened to let out a chorus of yells and laughter. The bronco reared back on the reins, sliding the puncher's right hand along the splintered rail. The man jerked his hand free, turned, and drove the toe of his boot twice into the horse's belly.

It was pitiful to see the animal slowly spraddle its four legs outward with grunts of agony. For an instant there was neither sound nor movement from the dozen men standing round. Two dance-hall girls, a moment before, had stepped from the saloon for a breath of air, carrying the billiard-cues with which they had been playing. Before we had quite realized what had happened to the horse, one of the girls had jumped to the edge of the platform, swung her cue twice around her head, and landed it across the face of the cow-puncher. The cue broke. Also, incidentally, the puncher's nose broke.

NOW, this was justice, prompt and satisfying, but the incident as it stands is not a short story. It was not until I had lived for a number of years in the desert, and had seen some of the ways in which the desert works out the law of compensation, that I conceived the story of Bartholomew Webb and "The Affairs of Men."—WILLIAM DAVID BALL.

P. S. I love horses, guns, and the open places. I smoke, I swear, and I'm always in need of money. This last condition, I feel, well fits me for the profession of letters.

Finish the job with the Victory Liberty Loan!

SO FAR as it could, our magazine has always leaned toward stories built on a sound basis of fact and it is gratifying to learn, from an authority, that two of our writers' brigade have not only made good in the groundwork of a story laid some thousands of years back in B. C., but have made a valued contribution.

Certainly all kinds sit at our Camp-Fire. Of the last three letters I've picked up, one is from a college professor, another from an ex-hobo, a third from an old-timer of the West, and among those just coming to my hand I see letters from a mining engineer, another old Westerner, a real-estate dealer, a U. S. Post-Office official, a merchant, an adventurer and showman, a physician, a woman writer, a paymaster in the Navy.

And now back into B. C. and archeology and obscure history:

— —

I have been a reader of your magazine for a number of years, and I enjoy each issue immensely. It is a great relief to turn from the daily grind of life and get on to the rim of things.

I AM a professional man, a college professor of the classical languages and a professional archeologist. I have followed Bishop and Brodeur in their stories, especially the one entitled "In the Grip of the Minotaur." I may say that I believe they have solved the puzzle. As one who is very familiar with the site of Homeric Troy and Knossos, allow me to extend to these gentlemen my congratulations. You will find in my latest book, "Studies in Vergil," that I give them the credit of solving the puzzle of the first scene in Book VI. of the Æneid. The book is published by The Aryan Press, Point Loma, California.

. . . . . I have spent my life in archeological and anthropological research round the globe (having circled it three times, among all the strange, savage peoples of the world) and in editing the oldest archaeological journal in America, written books and articles upon these subjects.—J. O. KINNAMAN.

Own and keep Victory Liberty Bonds.

THIS is not the first time we have had a story from the Baroness Orczy but the following is none the less interesting on that account. It was written before the war and came to us on the occasion of the appearance of "The Laughing Cavalier" in our magazine.

I think it is pretty generally known by now that England, though very dear to me, is only the country of my adoption. I was born in Hungary, at a place called Tarna-Ors, which is in the very heart of the most magnificent corn-land in Europe.

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MY PARENTS only came to England when I was almost grown up and I never spoke a word of English until I was fifteen. Within three months I was acting in a school play and within six months I had passed first-class College of Preceptors exam. with honors and a special prize for languages.

My theosophist friends tell me that this all fits into the theory of reincarnation—they declare that in one of my previous existences I was an Englishwoman.

Be that as it may, I certainly am an Englishwoman—in all but blood.

MY FATHER, Baron Orczy, besides being a distinguished diplomatist in his own country, was above all things a musician to his finger-tips. His beautiful opera, "Il Rinnegato," dedicated to the late Queen of the Belgians who was a Hungarian princess, was performed in London at the old Her Majesty's Theater with great success. He also on more than one occasion conducted his own compositions at the celebrated Philharmonic Concerts of the early '80s, and had also the honor several times to conduct the Royal Amateur Orchestral Society of which the late Duke of Edinburgh was the most distinguished violinist.

The great musical geniuses of the late nineteenth century were intimate friends at our house: Richard Wagner, the Abbé Liszt, Charles Gounod, Massenet, to quote only a few names from among those men who in those days used to pat me on the shoulder and ask me if I meant to be a musician like my father. Whereat I always answered, "No!"

THUS I was brought up in an atmosphere of music rather than of the sister arts. Nor, strangely enough, did I show in my earlier life the slightest tendency, talent or even desire to write. As I had no overwhelming talent for music, I wanted to be an artist. I studied art for years and achieved no small measure of success in it. I was at one time a constant exhibitor at the R. A. My picture, "The Jolly Young Waterman," illustrative of the old English ballad, "He eyed the young rogues with so charming an air that this waterman ne'er was in want of a fare!" hung on the line in the "gem room" of the Academy was quite one of the features of its year.

I was greatly encouraged in those days in my art studies by my old friend Edwin Long, R. A., the creator of those wonderfully popular pictures "Diana or Christ" and "The Babylonian Marriage Market."

WHILST studying art at old "Heatherley's" in Newman Street, I met my husband, Mr. Montagu Barstow, who already then was a well-known artist. For a few years after my marriage I joined him in doing numberless illustrations in black-and-white for books and magazines.

I have no hesitation in saying that—though during the period of my art-studentship I had of course no thoughts of becoming a novelist—that same art-training has been of incalculable value to me in my career. It taught me to see the scenes of my books and of my plays pictorially.

I BECAME an author almost literally in the turn of a hand. This was but a very few years ago. My husband and I were house-hunting, or, rather, studio-hunting, and in the interval we were staying as paying guests with a family whose chief recreation consisted in writing stories for magazines. These they would read out loud to one another and also to us before sending them round on their weary way to various editors, and, as they were not very brilliant, they were for the most part returned with the usual thanks. But one day one of these products of none too fertile brains was actually accepted for publication, terms were discussed and agreed upon, and altogether there was in the atmosphere of the Kensington house that delightful sense of excitement which comes only from artistic success. Some of the excitement also crept into me. To be quite frank: though there was neither hatred or malice in its composition, there was quite a good deal of jealousy seething inside me, and later on in the day I said to my husband:

"Look at these people who have never been outside their own limited circle. They not only write stories but have them accepted and paid for. Why shouldn't I, who have been all over Europe and have known so many people who are worth knowing, write stories too?"

"Why shouldn't you?" was my husband's simple comment.

AND that was the beginning of my literary career. Until then I had never even thought of such a thing. I had never taken up a pen for any other purpose than writing letters—and as few of these as possible. But now I set to with a will and wrote two short-stories which I sent to *Pearson's Magazine*. They were accepted and paid for at the rate of 10 guineas each.

But my first novel was "The Scarlet Pimpernel." I saw the whole story first, the scenes of the French revolution and the dandy-hero.

The novel was offered to a round dozen publishers who would have none of it.

Finally, going to less and less well-known publishers, the MS. at last found its way to Messrs. Greening & Co.

Close upon a million copies of the book have been printed and sold. The novel has been translated into fourteen different languages, and in Brazil it forms a portion of the library for the blind.

My third romance, called "A Son of the People," is descriptive of my old home in Hungary. The house which is described so fully in the novel is the house in which I was born. The life of the territorial magnates of that part of Europe was the first life which I knew.

As a matter of fact, the agrarian riots in connection with the setting up of a steam-mill, and the total destruction of a magnificent crop of wheat, occurred on my father's estate, and he it was who was the victim of that outrage. The peasantry was furious with him for introducing the grinding of corn through an agency which they could not understand, and one night just when the corn was ready for harvest and the weather so dry that not one atom of moisture was there to check the flames, they set fire to the four corners of a twenty-acre corn field.

I was a tiny girl at the time but I remember seeing the red sky, hearing the shouts and the tramping and being told that the corn was burning and that the horses and cattle were in danger in their stables.
—BARONESS ORCZY.

Buy Victory Bonds and keep them.

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INSTEAD of running "Fighting the Hun Web" occasionally, as previously stated, it seems best to discontinue that department entirely. The Hun Web is still working, but there are many other dangerous webs and the only way to fight them all is outlined in "Looking Ahead for Democracy."

THE last buffalo living at large in a wild state. What is the latest date on which one has been seen? Here is the testimony of an old-timer to June, 1882. A smaller man or a less real sportsman would have shot those poor last specimens of a vanishing race merely because he had the chance. It was probably a matter of food and skins for the Sioux. The writer is the brother of Major Frank North, inquired for at a past Camp-Fire by "Uncle Frank" Huston. At the end of his letter he said something about being afraid he'd talk too much when he got started on Indian fighting days. Not a chance. He is exactly the kind we most like to listen to and we hope Captain North will tell us a lot more about the old times.

Columbus, Neb.

I saw in the *Adventure* of December third an article headed "The Last Buffalo," by William Francis Hooker. The date he gives as 1879.

NOW I was riding range on the Cody and North Range sixty-five miles northwest of North Platte, Neb., at the head of the Dismal River, and in June, 1882, I ran across a herd of buffalo. There were twenty-eight head of cows and bulls, and seven calves. They were about seven miles from the ranch and my brother, Major Frank North, his daughter, a girl of twelve, and a nephew of ours, Mr. E. W. North, all rode out to where they were and, getting as close as we could before they saw us, we dashed out after them. They spilt into two bunches, and my nephew and I followed one bunch and cut out a live young bull and Ed killed him. I might have killed a half-dozen if I had felt so inclined, but I had killed many buffalo and so didn't care to.

MY BROTHER and his daughter Stella were both splendidly mounted and they cut out a cow and calf and tried to drive them to the ranch, but didn't succeed in doing it. He (my brother) said if I had been with them we could easily have roped the cow and calf, but he had no rope and so let them go, of course. He could have killed them, but didn't care to. Many years before that I saw him kill eleven buffalo with twelve shots from his revolvers. But that has nothing to do with the last buffalo. This band was all killed by a hunting party of Sioux Indians from the Rosebud Agency the following Fall, 1882. It is my belief that this was the last buffalo killed north of the Platte River in Nebraska, but I think there were one or two killed near the Republican River in the late eighties.

I ALSO saw in this number an inquiry from Frank H. Huston about my brother, Major Frank North. I am no writer, but if Mr. Huston will journey this far east some time and stop here for a few days as my guest, I can tell him many things about the chief of chiefs.

Does Mr. Huston know that he was named that by the Pawnee Indians? *Pawnee La Shano* which means "Chief of the Pawnees," and that included the chiefs of the Pawnees. No Indian and only one other white man ever bore this name among the Pawnees. The white man was General Frémont. Mr. Huston seems to know the Old Sidney pretty well. I wonder what year he was there. My brother was with General George A. Crooke (with two companies of his Pawnee Scouts) when he made his Winter campaign in the Powder River Country in 1876-1877. I was with him and was captain of one of the companies of Pawnee Scouts. We left Sidney Barrack in October and, after going with General McKenzie down to Chadron Creek where we rounded up Red Cloud and his band and took them into the reservation, we joined General Crooke at Fort Laramie and went with him to the head of Powder River where we fought the Cheyennes under Dull Knife. Killing many of them and completely destroying their village, we then returned to Sidney, Neb., about the first of February, 1877, I think, and were camped on Lodge Pole Creek just below the post till the following Spring.

I am the last one left of the officers of the Pawnee Scouts.—CAPTAIN L. H. NORTH.

AND another reply about Major North.

Los Angeles, Cal.

Major Frank North's celebrated company of Pawnee Scouts did wonderful work in the Middle West between '64 and '70. His name is a very familiar one to Army officers who were on the plains during that period. I have an old friend, now close to eighty years of age, living in the State of Washington who was with North at this time.

Later, Major North was in partnership with Bill Cody in the cattle business on Dismal River, sixty-five miles north of North Platte, Neb. Major North was greatly esteemed and beloved by his Pawnee scouts. At one time his outfit were guarding construction trains on the U. P. Ry., until its completion to Ogden, and they had many a warm scrap with the Sioux and Cheyennes, who "jumped" the construction camps at every opportunity. North was born in New York State in 1840.—E. A. BRININSTOOL.

WE'D like to explain to Mrs. M. A. Monsen that this office di not answer her several letters for the simple reason that she gave no address in any of them. This is particularly regretted as her object was to send letters and comforts to our boys in France.

OUR aluminum identification cards have met with such favor that we have far more demands for them at twenty-five cents than for the pasteboard cards given free.—ARTHUR SULLIVANT HOFFMAN.

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LOOKING AHEAD FOR DEMOCRACY

1. Underneath the present world turmoil there lies one big impulse—mankind's still half-blind insistence upon getting the real democracy it has not yet got. Nothing can stop this general movement. By no chance can our own country escape it. It is an avalanche started by the war, and it is only half-way down the hill. This irresistible force must follow one of two paths—the path of force or the path of lawful democratic methods.

Force is essentially *autocratic*. It imposes the will of some upon others in entire violation of the democratic rights of these others. Force can exist only *by* force; the rule of force inevitably brings real control into fewer and fewer hands. And democracy is gone when *any* autocratic minority controls a people, whether that minority is Labor or Capital, politicians or a military clique, a king or a demagog. You can not best advance democracy by violating it.

But if the avalanche is to follow the other path, the path of lawful democratic methods, then that path must be cleared for it. So far as our laws and institutions are concerned, the path is there and usable. But there are obstructions in it that must be cleared away lest they turn the avalanche into the seemingly clearer path of force.

Some of the obstructions are due to our present laws and institutions, but we make our own laws and institutions and can change them. The more serious obstructions have been built up by our own neglect, our own failure to meet our democratic obligations actively, intelligently, honestly. We, the lazy majority, have let too much control slip into the hands of non-lazy minorities—politicians, grafters, Capital, with Labor now beginning to attain the same class-selfish power. These are obstructions more difficult to remove.

But the greatest of all obstructions lies in ourselves. We boasted of our democracy, but are beginning to see that we have much less of it than we thought. We are beginning to understand what democracy really is, and to see that we did *not* understand before. We had thought it was merely the privilege of doing as we pleased. We find that we have been trying to reach a goal without clearly knowing what the goal is. We have a general idea of democracy, but no *practical, definite, exact, fundamental standard of democracy to apply as actual test and measure of every concrete issue, great or small.* There is need to formulate that standard. And to apply it—daily, individually, persistently, honestly, understandingly. Until we do we can make little headway in clearing the right path for the avalanche.

2. Both those advocating force and those advocating lawful democratic methods forget the great fundamental truth that *democracy is not a form of government, a piece of machinery, but a state of mind, an attitude and practise of a people, principles and the daily application of those principles.* The machinery is of course necessary, but it is merely an expression of the attitude of mind, good or bad acording to the kind of democracy that is *in the people themselves.* Democracy can not suddenly be created by a revolution, or by the passing and enforcement of a thousand laws. Democracy is a *growth*, and it must be a growth in the minds of the individual citizens themselves.

The only possible way to get this growth is by education. And in the present rapid movement of events the only way to educate sufficiently and *in time* is by a *definite, organized, systematic effort.*

3. The specialists in sociology and political economy are very busy tinkering with the machine. Some of them are good mechanics, and good mechanics are needed. But all of them are so absorbed in mechanics that they forget all about the power (the people) that invented the machine, made it, put it out of repair, tinker with it themselves and are likely to smash it some day and jam an entirely new machine into the hands of the specialists for their learned tinkering.

For a specialist in any line, being a specialist, has generally lost his perspective, his sense of proportion. Make him take his eye from his microscope and apply it to a telescope turned upon the whole sky and to his specialized vision the tiny atoms of the specialist's microscope slides will still loom so large that he can not see the stars or the distances between them. He can see a fly on the barn-door but not the barn-door. Specialists are highly valuable—as specialists. But unfortunately almost none of them specialize in a sense of proportion, and not too many of them in horse-sense. At present, for example, they are wrangling learnedly over the style of architecture for our national house, but no one of them is sufficiently intelligent to give prime thought to the quality of the bricks out of which it must be built. The greatest architect in the world can not build a sound house out of rotten

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bricks. The most learned economist can not build a sound government out of bad citizens.

Nor by specialist is meant only the college professor type. Many of the loudest specialists now offering architectural advice are politicians, labor leaders, captains of industry, I. W. W. and Bolshevik spokesmen, retired capitalists, foreign propagandists. Aside from the self-interest of most of them, not one out of a thousand can, if you pin him down, give you a statement of democracy's fundamentals and their logical and full application to actual affairs that can not be riddled like a sieve. The other day one of our foremost statesmen made the remarkable statement (he happened to be speaking of Bolshevism) that it would be undemocratic to change our present system of government. This "statesman," who devotes his life to public affairs, doesn't know enough about democracy to understand that its very essence is the expression of the people's *will*, that a people living under it have the right to adopt monarchy, anarchy, Bolshevism, anything they choose. If our statesmen are so ignorant of democracy, how about the majority of us with whom public affairs are of only secondary interest?

But the trouble is that for generations we have let the specialists do most of our thinking for us, merely debating among ourselves over the specialized issues their distorted vision has brought to the front for our attention.

If we are to formulate a standard of fundamental democracy and if we are to inculcate the understanding and practise of fundamental democracy, one of the most important tasks is to teach ourselves the need of at least trying to think for ourselves and the need of realizing that the affairs of a nation of people are to be approached with the same kind of homely, common-sense reasoning that is best applied to the affairs of an individual, the kind that is within reach of the plain, ordinary citizen.

And surely common-sense tells us that a sound house can not be built from rotten brick, or a sound government from bad citizens, and that democracy, being at bottom the attitude and practise of a people, is relentlessly dependent upon and measured by our *individual* state of mind and practise, and these in turn by our real understanding of the real fundamentals of real democracy.

4. Summing up, there is need, then, of definitely formulating the fundamentals of democracy (upon which it will be found that practically all of us really agree, once the mists are driven away); of educating ourselves, by definite, organized effort, in the understanding and practise of this standard; of working on the basis that only by shaping our individual selves can we rightly, or permanently, shape our government. (The governing machinery created by our present individual practise of democracy needs tinkering; there is need of better architectural plans for our national house; but these are secondary in permanent importance—effects, not causes—and will be taken up later.) In shaping our individual selves we must try to do more thinking for ourselves, and this brings us to another practical reason for concerted, organized action—the need of guarding against the propaganda of various special interests, usually wholly self-interested, class-selfish and biased.

For propaganda, on either side of any question, is essentially unfair, being always an effort to win people to one side by presenting only that side instead of presenting the case as a whole—an effort to impose an opinion on the people instead of presenting all the facts and leaving the people the democratic right to judge without prejudice or one-sided influence. In this respect propaganda is undemocratic as well as unfair. Open propaganda has justification in that it gives opportunity for answer, debate and fair consideration of both sides, but too often the other side does not use the opportunity or is unable to through lack of funds or other extraneous cause. For secret or disguised propaganda there is no justification and should be no tolerance.

In any case there is the evil of having a case decided, not by its merits, but according to which side is the better or more powerful presenter. Against this evil there is only one possible protection—greater alertness by the people, involving (1) a clearer understanding of the democratic fundamentals involved, (2) more careful guard against unfair presentations, (3) clearer knowledge of who and what interests are behind each presentation, and (4) exertion of popular pressure to see to it that presentations wear their own colors and that the organs of presentation are either not subsidized or are generally known as subsidized.

Only concerted, organized effort can accomplish this, but concerted, organized effort in time *can* accomplish it.

It means, among many other things, a free press and a clean press—free from individual, factional, party and business as well as government control or else plainly labeled—and discounted—as partisan. A difficult attainment, but possible—and necessary. It was Thomas Jefferson, I think, who said: "If I were to choose between a country with a government but without newspapers and a country with newspapers but without a government, I should unhesitatingly choose the latter." So much for the importance of the need.

The press is only one agent. To affect all of them is a huge task and possible only to *organized* effort.

The importance of the need lies in the fact that these agencies largely—at present too largely—shape *public opinion*. And public opinion is what shapes the world.

Only one kind of propaganda is justified fully and always—the kind that teaches people to think for themselves. We lack this kind and have all the others.

5. Another way to state much of what has been said so far is that public opinion controls everything, therefore every effort must be made to make and keep it as independent and right as possible. It *does* control everything, and not all the specious argument in the world can shake that truth one iota. (That is another phase of this truth, to be considered by those who doubt the power of organized effort or who raise the excuse that our ballot and legislative machines are clogged or "owned.") Public opinion can accomplish anything it pleases, *if* it makes the effort. It can create, destroy, reward, punish, compel, prevent.

In a democracy it speaks in three ways: (1) ballot, (2) standing laws, (3) direct expression (press, platform, pictures, letters, conversation). The first two need no discussion here. The third has passed largely into disuse, yet it was the original method and lies back of both the others. It has in the past served, even in its crudest form, as a nation's sole executive force. Organized, even in a minor way, it

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now and then plays a mighty part in our present development—suffrage and labor pickets, Liberty Loan and Red Cross drives, gasoline-saving Sundays. In each case the pressure of public opinion, directly expressed.

Turn the matter over and over in your mind, watch its tremendous possibilities develop, and lose all doubts as to whether an organized movement of the people would have any difficulty in getting attention and results even if polls and legislative halls were closed against them.

The final power lies in the people. They can, if they desire it enough to make the effort, shape their government and public affairs in any way they please. Their voice is public opinion. It will be heeded—if raised.

6. There is still another reason for the organized popular movement advocated above. All the parties, classes, races, creeds and other special interests are already organized. As a result these factions, these various minorities, hold practically all the power, each using its power to serve *its own* ends. The only Americans who are *not* organized are the majority. As a result we are merely prey for the minority to fatten on.

No one of the factions is working for the good of *all* Americans. Each works for its own selfish interests, generally under a thin disguise of empty phrases. The only ones working for the good of the *whole* people, or even *intending* well for the whole people, are some individuals, without the aid of cooperation and organized numbers, and numerous organizations, without cooperation among themselves, centered each on some particular phase of public affairs and suffering from the specialist's usual lack of perspective and general accomplishment.

We, the unorganized majority, are violating democracy in letting a majority be ruled by a minority. Incidentally we are, on the ground of plain self-interest, fools.

There is need of the organization outlined above if the American people *as a whole* are to have a voice that can be heard above the clamor of the self-seeking minorities now holding all the power.

7. And still another need. Of those popular organizations now working for some one phase or other of the public good, there are very few of them that are not, generally quite unconsciously, working directly and fundamentally against the advance of democracy. Run them over in your mind and note that the vast majority of them are—*autocracies*. Organizations in which the many, and the organization itself, are controlled by the few. The many have no voice, no vote, no power.

And these organizations go complacently on their way, busily inculcating the spirit of autocracy, practising autocracy, teaching the habit of autocracy, training the people to let the few decide all their problems for them, map out their course for them, do their thinking for them! Using autocracies to teach and develop democracy! Here is final proof if any one doubts that we do not know enough about the fundamentals of democracy to apply them to our every-day problems or even to recognize a flagrant violation of democracy when we see it.

There is need of the new organization, and need that it should be a *democratic* one, controlled by its membership at large.

8. Another need. The world is turning itself inside out. No man can tell what turmoil and chaos may arise in our own country, and only fools predict. Our melting-pot has failed to melt. Many of us are hot under existing injustices and stupidities. Most of us are uneasy and confused. We are the mistrustful, or trusting, subjects of propaganda of all kinds and by all methods and in the interests of—we're not sure whom or what. Almost anything *can* happen.

And yet we are a democracy and among us, scattered and unorganized, in the various factions and out of them, are millions of Americans who believe in democracy, believe that it can get us anything we want, believe in working for the interest of the whole people, not of any part of them, and that only thus can we become fit to live in the larger brotherhood of mankind that will some day wipe out international lines. Some are radicals, some conservatives, but all are for anything and everything that will bring the fullest justice to all and the fullest development of democracy in the highest sense of the word. They are the bulwark of democracy in this country, the balance-wheel of safety.

At present they are unorganized, scattered, without policy or defense. And if, at the end of all the turmoil, civilization is to be found still advancing and real democracy forging steadily ahead, this is the group that must organize for the sake of these ends. In them lies all hope of stability and progress.

9. There are two ways to start such an organization. One is to turn to capitalists for financial support. The other, the more difficult one and the more democratic one, is to turn for both money and work to the people themselves. Which shall we do? And who are "we"? How many of you are ready to begin? How much will *you* do and give? Are you ready to go to work in your own locality?

For the main work is to be done by the people, not by a central headquarters. Preaching without practise is of little avail. It is ourselves as well as others that we must teach and train.

I am not talking mere generalities. For some eleven years I've been working out and testing and revising a very definite plan. One of the final tests was made on readers of this magazine a year ago and there has been very practical revision as a result of that test.

I have my own very clear ideas as to what should be done. But no one man can, or should, determine this matter. My plan can serve as a basis, but the opinions of all the rest of you are needed in the final shaping, and your active cooperation in turning plans into action and action into results.

This is no final call or appeal. These talks in "Looking Ahead for Democracy" will be continued. The American League for Citizenship, Inc., has been in existence for over a year, but so far only as a "holding" organization, attempting no general campaign until the right path is cleared ahead. Later there will come the actual work, but so far as possible I want it to come through your cooperation and to embody your ideas as well as my own.

Your interests in the matter are the same as my own—you are one of the American people as much as I. It's up to you as much as to me. What are you going to do about it? Write and tell me, or, if you are in New York, tell me in person. I must for the present serve as the clearing-house. What have you to send through?—A. S. H.

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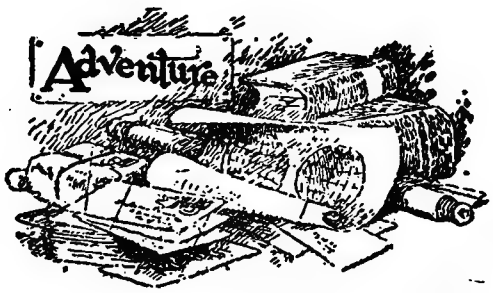

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Manuscripts

Glad to look at any manuscript. We have no "regular staff" of writers. A welcome for new writers. *It is not necessary to write asking to submit your work.*

When submitting a manuscript, if you write a letter concerning it, enclose it *with* the manuscript; do *not* send it under separate cover. Enclose stamped and addressed envelope for return. All manuscripts should be typewritten double-spaced, with wide margins, not rolled, name and address on first page. We assume no risk for manuscripts or illustrations submitted, but use all due care while they are in our hands. Payment on acceptance.

We want only clean stories. Sex, morbid, "problem," psychological and supernatural stories barred. Use almost no fact-articles. Can not furnish or suggest collaborators. Use fiction of almost any length; under 3000 welcomed.

Mail Address and Forwarding Service

This office, assuming no responsibility, will be glad to act as a forwarding address for its readers or to hold mail till called for, provided necessary postage is supplied.

Expeditions and Employment

While we should like to be of aid in these matters, experience has shown that it is not practicable.

Missing Friends or Relatives

Our free service department "Lost Trails" in the pages following, though frequently used in cases where detective agencies, newspapers, and all other methods have failed, or for finding people long since dead, has located a very high percentage of those inquired for. Except in case of relatives, inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

Addresses

Order of the Restless—Organizing to unite for fellowship all who feel the wanderlust. First suggested in this magazine, though having no connection with it aside from our friendly interest. Address WAYNE EBERLY, 1833 S. St., N. W., Washington, D. C.

Camp-Fire—Any one belongs who wishes to.

High-School Volunteers of the U. S.—An organization promoting a democratic system of military training in American high schools. Address *Everybody's*, Spring and Macdougal Streets, New York City.

Rifle Clubs—Address Nat. Rifle Ass'n of America, 1108 Woodward Bldg., Washington, D. C.

(*See also under "Standing Information" in "Ask Adventure."*)

Remember

Magazines are made up ahead of time. An item received today is too late for the current issue; allow for two or three months between sending and publication.

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Ask Adventure

A Free Question and Answer Service Bureau of Information on Outdoor Life and Activities Everywhere and Upon the Various Commodities Required Therein. Conducted for *Adventure* Magazine by Our Staff of Experts.

QUESTIONS should be sent, not to this office, but direct to the expert in charge of the department in whose field it falls. So that service may be as prompt as possible, he will answer you by mail direct. But he will also send to us a copy of each question and answer, and from these we shall select those of most general interest and publish them each issue in this department, thus making it itself an exceedingly valuable standing source of practical information. Unless otherwise requested, inquirer's name and town are printed with question; street numbers not given.

When you ask for *general* information on a given district or subject the expert will probably give you some valuable general pointers and refer you to books or to local or special sources of information.

Our experts will in all cases answer to the best of their ability, using their own discretion in all matters pertaining to their departments subject only to our general rules for "Ask Adventure," but neither they nor the magazine assumes any responsibility beyond the moral one of trying to do the best that is possible. These experts have been chosen by us not only for their knowledge and experience but for their integrity and reliability. We have emphatically assured each of them that his advice or information is not to be affected in any way by whether a given commodity is or is not advertised in this magazine.

1. **Service free to anybody, provided stamped and addressed envelope is enclosed. Correspondents writing to or from foreign countries will please enclose International Reply Coupons, purchasable at any post-office, and exchangeable for stamps of any country in the International Postal Union.**
2. **Send each question direct to the expert in charge of the particular department whose field covers it. He will reply by mail. Do NOT send questions to this magazine.**
3. **No reply will be made to requests for partners, for financial backing, or for chances to join expeditions. "Ask Adventure" covers business and work opportunities, but only if they are outdoor activities, and only in the way of general data and advice. It is in no sense an employment bureau.**
4. **Make your questions definite and specific. State exactly your wants, qualifications and intentions. Explain your case sufficiently to guide the expert you question.**
5. **Send no question until you have read very carefully the exact ground covered by the particular expert in whose department it seems to belong.**

1. ★ Islands and Coasts
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Islands of Indian and Atlantic oceans; the Mediterranean; Cape Horn and Magellan Straits. Also temporarily covering South American coast from Valparaiso south around the Cape and up to the River Plate. Ports, trade, peoples, travel.

2. The Sea Part 1
B. W. BRINTNALL, 5527 33d Ave., N. E., Seattle, Wash. Covering ships, seamen and shipping; nautical history, seamanship, navigation, yachting; commercial fisheries of North America; marine bibliography of U. S. and British Empire; seafaring on fishing-vessels of the North Atlantic and Pacific banks, small-boat sailing, and old-time shipping and seafaring.

3. ★ The Sea Part 2
CAPTAIN A. E. DINGLE, Cove Cottage, Pembroke West, Bermuda. Such questions as pertain to the sea, ships and men, local to the U. S., should be sent to Captain Dingle, not Mr. Brintnall.

4. Eastern U. S. Part 1
RAYMOND S. SPEARS, Little Falls, N. Y. Covering Mississippi, Ohio, Tennessee, Michigan and Hudson valleys; Great Lakes, Adirondacks, Chesapeake Bay: river, lake and road travel, game, fish and woodcraft; trapping, freshwater pearls, herbs; and their markets.

5. Eastern U. S. Part 2
HAPSBURG LIEBE, Johnson City, Tenn. Covering Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi, and N. and S. Carolina, Florida and Georgia except Tennessee River and Atlantic seaboard. Hunting, fishing, camping; logging, lumbering, sawmilling, saws.

6. Eastern U. S. Part 3
DR. G. E. HATHORNE, 44 Central Street, Bangor, Maine. Covering Maine; fishing, hunting, canoeing, guides, outfits, supplies.

7. Middle Western U. S. Part 1
CAPT.-ADJ. JOSEPH MILLS HANSON, care *Adventure*. Covering the Dakotas, Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas. Hunting, fishing, travel. *Especially*, early history of Missouri Valley.

8. Middle Western U. S. Part 2
JOHN B. THOMPSON, 4249A Juniata St., St. Louis, Mo. Covering Missouri, Arkansas and the Missouri Valley up to Omaha. Wilder countries of the Ozarks, and swamps; hunting, fishing, trapping, farming, mining and range lands; big timber sections.

9. Western U. S. Part 1
E. E. HARRIMAN, 2303 W. 23d St., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering California, Oregon, Washington, Utah, Nevada, Arizona. Game, fur, fish; camp, cabin; mines, minerals; mountains.

10. Western U. S. Part 2 and Mexico Part 1
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and the border states of old Mexico: Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo Leon and Tamaulipas.

11. North American Snow Countries Part 1
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering Minnesota, Wisconsin, Manitoba, a strip of Ontario between Minn. and C. P. Ry. Canoes and snow-shoes; methods and materials of Summer and Winter subsistence, shelter and travel, for recreation or business.

**(Enclose addressed envelope with 5 cents in coin, NOT stamps)*
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12. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 2
S. E. SANGSTER ("Canuck"), L. B. 393, Ottawa, Canada. Covering Height of Land and northern parts of Quebec and Ontario (except strip between Minn. and C. P. Ry.); southeastern parts of Ungava and Keewatin. Trips for sport, canoe routes, big game, fish, fur; equipment; Summer, Autumn and Winter outfits; Indian life and habits; Hudson's Bay Co. posts; minerals, timber; customs regulations. No questions answered on trapping for profit.

13. ★ North American Snow Countries Part 3
GEORGE L. CATTON, Gravenhurst, Muskoka, Ont., Canada. Covering southern Ontario and Georgian Bay. Fishing, hunting, trapping, canoeing.

14. North American Snow Countries Part 4
ED. L. CARSON, Clear Lake, Wash. Covering Yukon, British Columbia and Alberta including Peace River district to Great Slave Lake. Outfits and equipment, guides, big game, minerals, forest, prairie; travel; customs regulations.

15. North American Snow Countries Part 5
THEODORE S. SOLOMONS, 2837 Fulton St., Berkeley, Calif. Covering Alaska. Arctic life and travel; boats, packing, back-packing, traction, transport, routes; equipments, clothing, food, physics, hygiene; mountain work.

16. Hawaiian Islands and China
F. J. HALTON, Honolulu, T. H. Covering customs, travel, natural history, resources, agriculture, fishing, hunting.

17. Central America
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Canal Zone, Panama, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Honduras, British Honduras, Salvador, Guatemala. Travel, customs, language, game, local conditions, minerals, trading.

18. South America. Part 1
EDGAR YOUNG, 84 Court St., Brooklyn, N. Y. Covering Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, and Chile; geography, inhabitants, history, industries, topography, minerals, game, languages, customs.

19. Asia, Southern
GORDON MCCREAGH, 21 East 14th St., New York City. Covering Red Sea, Persian Gulf, India, Tibet, Burma, Western China, Siam, Andamans, Malay States, Borneo, the Treaty Ports; hunting, trading, traveling.

20. Japan and Korea
(Editor to be appointed.) Covering travel, hunting, customs of people, art and curios. (Mr. Ritchie, the former editor of this section, is now in France. His section is accordingly in abeyance until we can find a suitable successor.)

21. Russia and Eastern Siberia
CAPTAIN A. M. LOCHWITZKY (formerly Lieut.-Col. I. R. A., Ret.), Quartermaster, U.S. Troops, Mercedes, Texas. Covering Petrograd and its province; Finland, Northern Caucasus: Primorsk District, Island of Sakhalin; travel, hunting, fishing; explorations among native tribes; markets, trade. curios.

22. Africa Part 1
THOMAS S. MILLER, Eagle Bird Mine, Washington, Nevada County, Calif. Covering the Gold, Ivory and Fever Coasts of West Africa, the Niger River from the delta to Jebba, Northern Nigeria. Canoeing, labor, trails, trade, expenses; outfitting, flora; tribal histories, witchcraft, savagery.

23. Africa Part 2
GEORGE E. HOLT, Frederick, Md. Covering Morocco; travel, tribes, customs, history, etc.

24. ★ Africa Part 3. Portuguese East Africa
R. W. WARING, Corunna, Ontario, Canada. Covering trade, produce, climate, opportunities, game, wild life, travel, expenses, outfits, health, etc.

25. Africa Part 4. Transvaal, N. W. and Southern Rhodesia, British East Africa, Uganda and the Upper Congo
CHARLES BEADLE, care Authors' League of America, 33 West 42d St., New York. Covering geography, hunting, equipment, trading, climate, transport, customs, living conditions, witchcraft, opportunities for adventure and sport.

26. ★ New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa
TOM L. MILLS, *The Feilding Star*, Feilding, New Zealand. Covering New Zealand, Cook Islands and Samoa. Travel, history, customs; opportunities for adventurers, explorers and sportsmen.

27. Australia and Tasmania
ALBERT I GOLDIE, 424 Black Bldg., Los Angeles, Calif. Covering customs, resources, travel, hunting, sports, politics, history.

FIREARMS, PAST AND PRESENT

Rifles, shot-guns, pistols, revolvers and ammunition. (Any questions on the arms adapted to a particular locality should *not* be sent to this department but to the "Ask Adventure" editor covering the district in question.)

A.—All Firearms of Foreign Make (including comparisons between foreign and American makes.—J. B. THOMPSON, 4249A Juniata St., St. Louis, Mo.

B.—All Firearms of American Make. D. WIGGINS, Salem, Ore.

STANDING INFORMATION

For general information on U. S. and its possessions, write Sup't of Public Documents, Wash., D. C., for catalog of all Government publications.

For the Philippines and Porto Rico, the Bureau of Insular Affairs, War Dep't, Wash., D. C.

For Alaska, the Alaska Bureau, Chamber of Commerce, Central Bldg., Seattle, Wash.

For Hawaii, Hawaii Promotion Committee, Chamber of Commerce, Honolulu, H. I. Also, Dep't of the Interior, Wash., D. C.

For Cuba, Bureau of Information, Dep't of Agri., Com., and Labor, Havana, Cuba.

For Central and South America, John Barrett, Dir. Gen., Pan-American Union, Wash., D. C.

For R. N. W. M. P., Comptroller Royal Northwest Mounted Police, Ottawa, Can., or Commissioner, R. N. W. M. P., Regina, Sask. Only unmarried British subjects, age 22 to 30, above 5 ft. 8 in. and under 175 lbs., accepted.

For Canal Zone, the Panama Canal Commission, Wash., D. C.

For U. S., its possessions and most foreign countries, the Dep't of Com., Wash., D. C.

* *(Enclose addressed envelope with 3 cents in stamps NOT attached)*

The following "Ask Adventure" editors are now serving in our military forces. We hope you will be patient if their answers are at times delayed: Capt.-Adj. Joseph Mills Hanson; Capt. A. M. Lochwitzky.

Patagonian Coast Islands

WRECKING still provides a livelihood in at least one section of the world, it appears:

Question:—"Referring to *Adventure* and your address given in said magazine, I ask you kindly to give me some information about that part of Chile from the Straits of Magellan up north through the channels to the Gulf of Peña, about the climate and the tribes living there. Is there really any life on these hundreds of islands in the Smith's Channels, and if so what sort of savages are living there? We saw signs of life in Mollineux Sound, where we anchored the first night up from Punta Arenas, and again we saw savages on board a beached steamer—the *Hermia*—but couldn't get near enough and in touch with them.

"Are the Stewart Islands belonging to that group on the west coast of Patagonia or are they farther south? There was a boom in Valparaiso in 1892 about gold found on these islands by some shipwrecked sailors. What sort of town is Punta Arenas today?"—ERNEST R. JENTSCH, Shelton, Conn.

Answer, by Capt. Dingle:—Nearly all the islands in the seas you name have some kind of population, mostly transitory. The climate is bleak most of the year, and the average temperature for the year is only about forty. The natives are variously Alaculufs and Telehuelches, poor types mentally but in many cases of amazing physical development.

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They are harmless to parties able to care for themselves, but not to be trusted with inferior numbers. Beached steamers, or distressed vessels in any shape, are certain of a visit from natives bent on plunder anywhere around Terra del Fuego and the Straits. Stewart Island, situated about due south of Desolate Bay, is on the Terra del Fuegan coast in approximately latitude fifty-five degrees.

As for gold being found in that region, I believe the metal abounds all over the tip of the continent, because I have frequently seen small bottles of pure gold-dust bartered in trade by natives who could not have had any means of securing gold except by simply picking it up in the streams. The country, however, is not an easy one for white men to work or live in.

Punta Arenas is a town of importance now. It has thirty-five thousand people or more, and is modern and well kept in every way. It belongs to the republic of Chile, and has become quite a big port. I think you could get a lot of interesting information about these bleak islands by reading Darwin's "Voyage of the *Beagle*," which any decent book store could get for you. The *Beagle* made the most complete survey of the entire region, and in the book the results are set forth in great detail.

Sighting Shots

OUR new expert on American firearms, Mr. Wiggins, introduces himself to you, and promises to deliver the goods:

Sighting shots are usually misses, but we all learn something by where they land. So be it with these.

Adventure's gun department is a new feature, and the editor, handling American firearms, is as new as the department. His experience in the literary line is confined to "slinging the roller" over an old Washington press in a little sleepy Mid-Western town a few years since, so he trusts the adventurers will be patience itself when he advises 'em to use sling straps on their six-shooters, or similar rambling words.

This is a nook of the "Ask Adventure" department that we hope will be of great interest to all the readers, and of service to some, at least. We will endeavor to answer all questions sent to us, and with as great accuracy and dispatch as possible. If we get into deep water, we will say so at once, not give advice that we "guess is correct."

On the arms of past days we may be hazy at times, for no man can keep in his head all the makes and calibers of arms made in the past years. For instance, I have seen arms made in shops and never branded with the maker's name, and such are impossible to catalogue, inasmuch as they are seldom even patented. One beautiful model of a breechloading rifle is near here, and absolutely no designating marks to show whose brain conceived it, or whose hands forged it from the rough blocks. No, I can't get it; the owner keeps locks on the door when I call.

As to arms of the present dates, we think we can give all information apt to be desired. And perhaps even a little peep into the smoky clouds of the future. For instance, three of our greatest makers will soon place on the market bolt-action rifles second to none, even the Mauser being behind them in general desirability. American arms will soon take the place in the world of weaponry they occupied in the Sixties and Seventies—ahead of the rest of the world.

We can look for great changes in the quality of our ammunition (I am glad to say this, you may guess), and the work of our guns will be apt to be more satisfactory than for a few years since. For when Wilhelm spilled the beans he sure played hob with our gun-fodder. All the best seemed to be shipped abroad for big game shooting.

We will always be very much pleased to receive letters from users of firearms, whose experience with them is of interest. From such letters we will be able to gain knowledge of different arms, their performance, reliability, etc. Extracts from the more interesting will be printed in the pages of the A.A. department when feasible.

New arrivals in the shooting-iron line will be tested out and reported upon when possible. Such things are interesting to us all, we fancy.

So, having talked long enough, let's tie down our holsters, and get to it.

Goat Raising

WHEN the best goats are selling for $500 each, you can guess goat raising is a real business. It is. And in the West it is one of the big coming industries. Here is some expert information on how a man of small means may start a goat farm:

Question:—"I noticed recently a reference in *Adventure* to goat raising in Texas.

"I'm very keen to settle on some open air job and am therefore interested in farming of all kinds. What experience is required to commence goat farming on a small scale? How much capital would one require? What labor would be necessary?"—LIEUT. EWART E. STOCK, R. A. F., England.

Answer, by Mr. Harriman:—Now about goats. In the first place, any man starting in to raise goats must have a market. If he raises Angoras he can sell the mohair just about as easily as he can sell wool. The clip averages about two dollars and fifty cents per goat, 10s, 6d. The increase is what we call "velvet" in the States. A friend of mine ran Angoras on his forest acreage and told me they netted him about one dollar sixty per goat, or about 6s, 7d. As he ran about 3,200 he did very well.

If you wish to raise milch goats, you must locate near some city or town where you may sell milk and milch goats. Here the industry is only just on a substantial footing and the goat milk is selling at about one shilling sixpence a quart, or thrity-five cents. As goat milk is a far richer product than cow's milk, and contains ten times the amount of iron, it is becoming more in demand every day.

Now as to cost.

Pure bred does of the Saanen, Toggenburg or Anglo-Nubian breeds are selling here at from $200 to $400 each. Bucks that are pedigreed and record-making sires from $300 to $500. Other bucks, not proved, or slightly inferior form, $100 to $200.

The best thing to do in making a start is to buy a few cheaper does and breed to good buck at $10 for service. In this way you get something very good which you breed to another high standard buck, and about the third generation you have stock that

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ranks with the best. This is the way the man of small means works the game.

Any man who owns brush land, with a small water supply, in this part of the world, can start in raising milch goats and Karakul sheep, with fur rabbits, and the three will make him a handsome business. A lamb of the Karakul sheep, five months old, yields a pelt worth $20, and a Karakul lives on browse, twigs and leaves, just as a goat does. The fur rabbits raised here are bringing from 22 to 30 cents a pound for the meat and from $1.50 to $3.50 for the pelt. One killed at a near-by fur farm weighed 19 pounds and dressed 12. The meat sold at 22 cents and the pelt was tanned by the owner, his wife working it into a fur cape she values at $40, with just 3 other pelts of the same kind and 2 darker ones used in the making, 6 pelts in all. I recently saw a lot of furs made by this woman from rabbit skins and they were fine.

I have wandered away from goats to Karakul sheep and then to fur rabbits, because one suggested the other and I know all three are easily worked together. To go back to goats.

There are some men and women raising fine, pure-bred goats of all three milch breeds near this city, who began with an acre or two of land and perhaps $200, buying one young doe that had been bred to a prize buck. Then, when two kids were born, trading one kid for another, a buck for a doe, and soon having three does bred. The steps by which some breeders have risen are very small, but they led up, always, and now they are making good money.

The amount of work necessary is small per goat; half an hour three times a day when there is only one. A score will use up all your time properly, and you can take care of two score with only a little more work, except for milking. I would not try goat raising unless I meant to devote my time to it, just as soon as I could acquire a large enough number to warrant it.

Unless one makes it a business his goat raising will be nothing but a fad and amount to nothing.

Send $1.25 to *The Goat World*, Baldwin Park, California, U. S. A. and get a year's subscription to a publication that will inform you on goats.

For Angora goats you need only brush pasture and water supply, with about the same care you give a flock of range sheep. They are much more immune to disease than sheep and they know how to take care of themselves far better. The average goat knows more than fifty sheep.

In New Jersey there are a number of goat dairymen, keeping from 40 to 80 goats, common kind, that each give about 3 quarts of milk per day. Here the three great imported stocks are predominant and no dairy is yet running as such, though many people buy milk from goat owners. As goat milk is considered superlatively good for tuberculosis patients, as it is for small children and dyspeptics, a goat dairy should be a success here. It will probably be established soon.

Feeding goats is easy and cheap. Some goat men advertise to board does taken for service at ten cents per day, stall fed. Pasture $1.00 a month.

I should think that a man who could rake up a thousand or two and had plenty of pluck, combined with industry, could start in with goat raising, have a rabbit hutch or two on the side, and later get a start with Karakul sheep and make a fortune out of the three animals. It might appear slow work at first, and he would be discouraged often, but if he would only "carry on" he would win out in good shape.

That is my impression from what I have seen.

We may come to the Italian milkman style yet and have a she goat bleating at our doors every morning.

Remember, Angoras will simply have to be run as sheep are run and require little attention. Milch goats like the three breeds mentioned will take a lot of time if you have enough to pay for handling.

You have to feed scientifically or you will not get enough milk. You have to watch constantly to avoid trouble of some kind, disordered stomach, coughs, colds, etc., as all these affect the flow of milk.

Nigeria

ONE is always fascinated by the thought of an unexplored country. What riches may be hidden away in the depths of the largest jungle in the world, along the Niger River!

Question:—"I desire information concerning West Africa:

"How is the ivory trade carried on? Are there many whites in Nigeria, and what are their industries?

"How are the native tribes governed?

"Has the country been fully explored?

"Can you tell me anything about native witchcraft and the savagery of back-country tribes?

"How is trade carried on at trading posts? What are the chief exports of Nigeria?

"Are there jungles along the Niger River?

"When did Nigeria become a British colony?"—FRANK HALLUM, Giant, Calif.

Answer, by Mr. Miller:—Answering your several questions on Nigeria:

The ivory trade: Ivory has grown very scarce of recent years. What little comes into the trading stations through native hunters is bartered with cottons, knives, fish-hooks, leaf-tobacco, and such trinkets and commodities as appeal to barbarians.

The whites in Nigeria go there on three-year contracts for the trading companies, some as agents of trading stations, some to the tin fields.

Travel is by canoe and trail. The Niger Company and the Government run steamers up the Niger and its main tributaries, also a railroad crosses the country from Lagos to the interior. Away from the river and the railroad, a traveler must hire native porters. Travel is very expensive.

The government of the natives is by district commissioners and residents, who compare with American whites in charge of the Indians, combining the jobs of police chief and magistrate. Native police work under white officers and native soldiery—the Housa Regiments—officered by whites control the country.

Exploration: Large jungle tracts and interior areas remain unexplored.

Witchcraft and savagery are too comprehensive for me to answer in a letter, but you will find many very interesting books on the subject in your local public library.

Trade is largely by barter, though the British are introducing currency and familiarizing the Africans with its usages.

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Jungles: The Niger Delta is the largest jungle in the world.

Exports are raw rubber, palm kernels and palm oil, ivory, kola nut, shea butter, capsicum, feathers, tin, etc.

Customs of native tribes, see library books.

The government of Niger was taken over by Great Britain from the Royal Niger Chartered Company in 1900. Its long and interesting history you will find in your library, a history woven with the daring lives of explorers from the days Dr. Barth and, later, Mungo Park, set out to run down one of the world's great mysteries—the source of the Niger.

You must understand that Nigeria is twice the size of California, ranging from the Ivory Coast, with its numerous tribes of out-and-out, pure-blooded negroes, to the Pagan Belt and to the Mohammedan hinterlands of Sokoto.

Florida Fishing and Hunting

OUR most tropical State has long been claimed by its admirers, to be truly a sportsman's paradise. And few dispute this after spending a Winter in the land of royal palms.

Question:—"Am writing to you in reference to Florida. Have never been in that State since I was four years old. I intend to go later in the Winter and would appreciate the following information:

"What part of the State has the best hunting, and what class of game is to be had?

"What part of the State is the best for fishing? What kind of fish are to be had in the interior waters and on either coast?

"What do you think I should take in the way of arms and tackle?

"Where can I get copies of Florida game laws, etc.?

"Can you give me any information about hunting and fishing in De Soto County, Florida?"—W. H. STANAGE, Cincinnati, Ohio.

Answer, by Mr. Liebe:—The best hunting in Florida will be found, I think, in De Soto and Lee counties, and Fort Myers makes a good starting-point for hunting in either county. Hotel Bradford, Fort Myers, is headquarters for many sportsmen. Game in abundance will be found back toward Lake Okeechobee and the Everglades; there are deer, bear, wild turkey, duck, jacksnipe, plover, quail, wildcat, panther, and alligators. And maybe rattlers and cottonmouths!

It is claimed that the waters around Fort Myers are the best fishing waters. They have tarpon, channel-bass and redfish, ladyfish, trout, bonehead, sheepshead, jackfish or cavelle, snappers, snook or ravelia. The Gulf abounds in kingfish, pompano, Spanish mackerel, grouper, amberjack, sawfish and devilfish. The fresh-water lakes and streams have big-mouthed black bass, some pickerel, and a few other smaller kinds of fish.

As to guns and tackle: my advice is to take what tackle you may have, and then buy in Fort Myers any that you need and haven't already in your kit. If you're a good rifle-shot, I would use a rifle, any first-class kind of medium bore, for the larger game, and a shotgun for the smaller game. If you are not a good rifle-shot, a 12-gage shotgun, with 30 or 32 inch barrel, with buckshot, will bring down a bear or a deer or a panther if the range isn't too great. If a rifle is used, I suggest a lead ball. A good-sized bear can take half a dozen neat little steel-jackets and then live long enough to kill a good dog or two—and perhaps a man.

Write the State Game and Fish Warden, or the State Game and Fish Commission, at Tallahassee, and ask for the copy of game and fish laws. Unless I'm much mistaken, the hunting season on almost everything is open until March 1st.

LOST TRAILS

NOTE—We offer this department of the "Camp-Fire" free of charge to those of our readers who wish to get in touch again with old friends or acquaintances from whom the years have separated them. For the benefit of the friend you seek, *give your own name if possible.* All inquiries along this line, unless containing contrary instructions, will be considered as intended for publication in full with inquirer's name, in this department, at our discretion. We reserve the right, in case inquirer refuses his name, to substitute any numbers or other names, to reject any item that seems to us unsuitable, and to use our discretion in all matters pertaining to this department. Give also your own full address. We will, however, forward mail through this office, assuming no responsibility therefor. We have arranged with the Montreal *Star* to give additional publication in their "Missing Relative Column," weekly and daily editions, to any of our inquiries for persons last heard of in Canada. Except in case of relatives inquiries from one sex to the other are barred.

WILSON, MONTGOMERY EARL. Last heard of in hospital in Yorks., England, November 25, 1918. Corporal in the 309th Aero Service Squadron. Home believed to have been in Seattle, Washington. Monty, remember our last night in Leeds, and the wreck on the Golf Links. The big six, and Brittan. Any one knowing his address please send it to his pal. Address—HUNDLEY (GIP) HURLEY, Gilroy, Calif.

BYARS, ALEXANDER TERRY. Last heard from on board the U. S. S. *Saturn*, at Cordova, Alaska, June 5th, 1917. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his mother. Address—MRS. A. T. BYARS, 506 Laurel St., Texarkana, Ark.

SCOTT, HARRY. Portuguese royalist refugee; adventurer in China, Deputy U. S. Marshal out of Walla-Walla or Missoula; met "Butch" Cassidy and Wild Bunch on railway station platform in Idaho; papermaker in Japan and New York State; tall, smooth-shaven, Westerner type; about 50 years of age. Joined Canadian forces as Major—97th Scotch Highlanders? Friends would like to know more about him and his fate. Address—R. S. SPEARS, Little Falls, New York.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be reprinted alphabetically.

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TAYLOR, ALFRED. Five years ago went to Vancouver, British Columbia. Black hair. About 5 feet, 6 inches tall. Any one know his whereabouts please write to his sister. Address—MISS AMY TAYLOR, care of MRS. JACKSON, 1801 Smith St., Providence, R. I.

HOURAHAN, JOHN C. Sapper, 2nd Canadian Engineers. Last heard of as being discharged at Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, November 29th, 1918. Sixteen years of age, 5 feet 9 inches tall; weighs about 130 pounds, blond hair, blue eyes, rosy complexion. Any information will be appreciated. Address—JAMES J. HOURAHAN, 1115 Boston Road, New York.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

COSTELLOE, JACK. Age 28 years, about 5 feet 10 inches, heavy build, dark complexion, brown eyes, and black curly hair. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his sister. Address—JEANETTE COSTELLOE, 2 Nelson St., Coburg, Melbourne, Australia.

HOUGHTON, FRANK WENTWORTH. Write, or come to see mother, for her heart is breaking and sister is very ill. Little brother talks of you all the time. Wentworth, do come home, mother loves you dearly. Address—MRS. FRANCES J. MACGREGOR, 101 Bagg St., Detroit, Mich.

Inquiries will be printed three times, then taken out. In the first February issue all unfound names asked for during the past two years will be printed alphabetically.

AMBROSE, SHRIS. Last heard from in California. Profession, window decorator. Was with Siegel & Cooper, of Chicago, about twelve years ago. Any information will be greatly appreciated by his son. Address—EDWARD AMBROSE, Glen Riddle Farm, Berlin, Md.

OLSON, HJALMAR. Native of Gottland, Sweden, twenty-eight, tall, near-sighted. Last heard of in Buffalo, N. Y. Believed to have gone into Army or Navy. Any information concerning him will be very much appreciated by his sister. Address—MRS. EDWIN JOHNSON, 226 Vandeventer Ave., Long Island City, New York.

MOHAN, ART. Write and send me your address. My letters to you have been returned.—P. O., Gen. Del., Springfield, Mass.

Please notify us at once when you have found your man.

BERMAN, HERMAN A. Missing from home since Oct. 22, 1918. Age. 14½ years, last heard from was at Kenilworth, New Jessey, from where he is believed to have gone to Virginia. Any one knowing his whereabouts please write to his brother. Address—SAMUEL R. BERMAN, 68 East 114th St., New York.

COOPER, TED. Left Johannesburg, S. A., for Melbourne, Aus., in 1904. Please write. Address—WM. EVANS, 5621 Central Ave., Los Angeles, Calif.

DALTON, GEORGE. (RIP.) Last heard from in Montreal, Canada, two years ago. Age about 20 years, wears glasses. He was a rivet heater on structural work in Canada. Any information will be appreciated. If you see this, Rip, write to me. Address—DAN KANE, care *Adventure*.

THE following have been inquired for in full in either the Mid-April or First-May issues of Adventure. They can get the name of inquirer from this magazine:

ANDERSON, ANDY; Blesh, Rudolph P.; Nicholson; Brown, Clayton Bush, Jack; Welch, Red; Wilensky; Decker, Edward L.; Dominick, Mac.; Elliott, Robert; Hannold, Henry F.; Hart, Jack; Haynes, Eddie; Baker, Benson; Hendricks, E. Sylvester; Johnson, J. H.; King, William Benedell, Henry; Kline, Serg't Onie F.; Kohn, Pvt. Wm.; Ledingham or Ward, John; Lucas, Jo; Lucas, Mrs. Jo; McGovern, John; McMahon, Michael; Michael, James; Monroe, C.; Parker, Charles A.; Shaw, Sylvester Elmer; Wallinger, E. A.; Walters, W. E.; Van Dorn, Earl.

MANUSCRIPTS UNCLAIMED

HASTLAR GAL BREATH; Ruth Gilfillan; Leo Hays; Jack P. Robinson; Ray Ozmer; Miss Jimmie Banks; O. B. Franklin; Cole Williams; G. H. Bennett.

Please send us your present address. Mail forwarded to address given us does not reach you. Address—J. E. Cox, care *Adventure*.

THE TRAIL AHEAD
FIRST JUNE ADVENTURE

Seven stories of daring men in dangerous places come to you with the First June *Adventure*—out May 18th—besides the three listed on the second page. Ten tales in all.

ONE LONE MAN — ***By Hapsburg Liebe***
Back to the mountains of Tennessee comes *Tom Reagle*—to find a strange welcome.

ON THE TRAIL OF TIPPOO TIB (A Six-Part Story) Part III — ***By Talbot Mundy***
Search for the hidden ivory in Africa leads *Yerkes* and his comrades into dangerous ways.

LURE OF THE LODE — ***By Stephen Chalmers***
Treasure in the desert—and the only clue to its location the mumbled words of a dying man.

ON ONE WAVE — ***By Hugh S. Fullerton***
A story of a storm that raged over the Great Lakes—and of the man who braved it.

THE SON OF A FOOL — ***By Edgar Young***
Which tells why *Eugene Rodin* wandered to the far corners of the world but never to his own home town.

THE VENGENCE OF ROONEY — ***By Clyde B. Hough***
Brandon was a sergeant once. Now he is a bartender in the Philippines. There are reasons.

HIGHMIGHTY CAP'N BEAUMONT — ***By David A. Curtis***
A story of the old steamboating days on the Mississippi.

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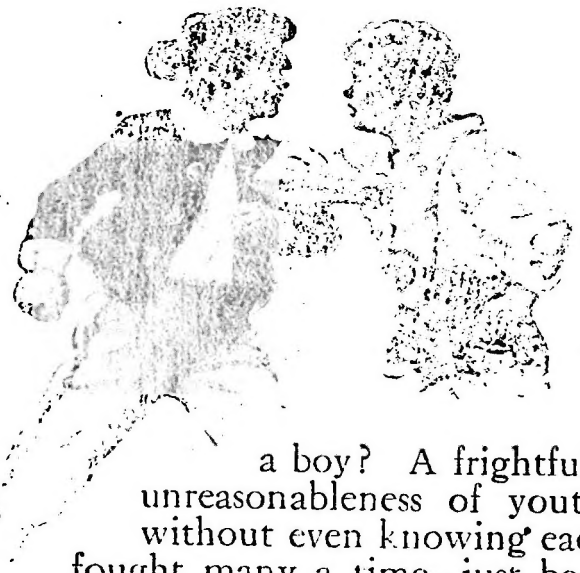

"You're Afraid!"

"I *ain't* afraid." "I ain't."
"You are." "You are."

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MARK TWAIN

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No wonder our soldiers and sailors like Mark Twain best. No wonder the boys at Annapolis told Secretary Daniels that they would rather have Mark Twain than anyone else. To them, as to you, Mark Twain is the spirit of undying youth . the spirit of real Americanism—for he who came out of that loafing-out-at-elbows-down-at-the-heels Mississippi town—he has passed on to the world the glory of our inspiring Americanism—the serious purpose that underlies our laughter—for to Mark Twain humor is only incidental—and he has made eternal the springs of its youth and enthusiasm.

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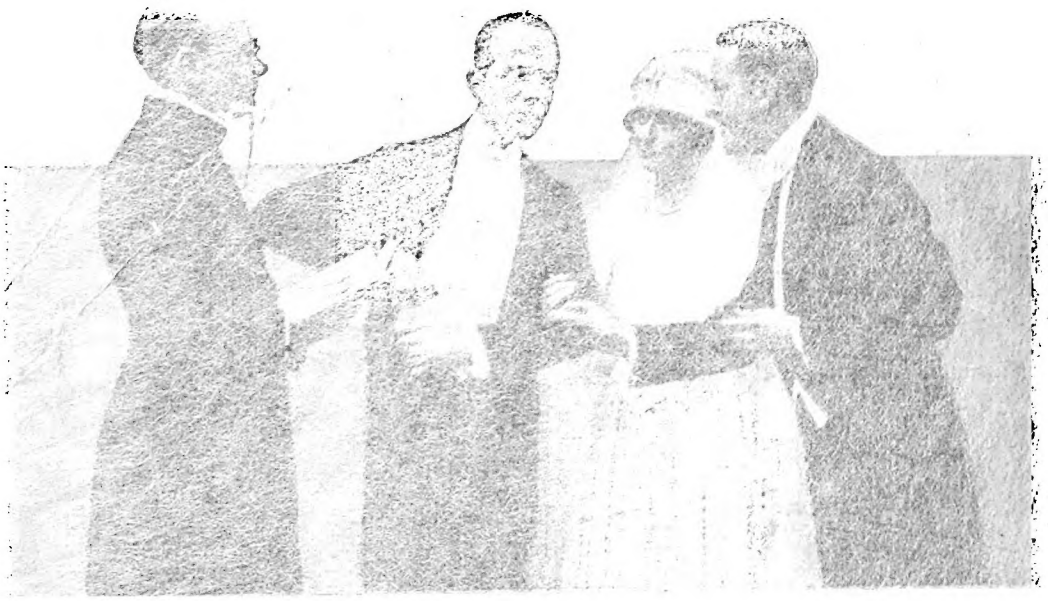

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